Labour, the Board of Education and the preparation of the 1944 Education Act.

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The Labour Party hoped that legislation passed during the war which began in 1939 would bring multilateral schools or at least parity between the three main existing types of post-primary schools in terms of buildings, access, finance and public esteem. Officials at the Board of Education, whose influence on these aspects of the legislation was greater than that of ministers, were for the most part committed to the tripartite development of post 11 education on Hadow lines. They expressed their views in the Green Book which they used to confine discussion and which on all major issues affecting secondary education survived unscathed all subsequent negotiations. The Norwood Committee, which was greatly influenced by Board officials, endorsed their view; Spens, whose pre-war report went too far in some respects for the officals, was denigrated; publication of the Special Fleming Report, which was politically unacceptable to Butler because it wanted the abolition of fees in direct grant schools, was temporarily suppressed.

The Labour Party was inhibited as an instrument for reform by its Roman Catholic and non-conformist membership, its parliamentary weakness, and poor relations between Ede and its Education Advisory Committee. During the parliamentary debates it became clear that there would be no legislative commitments to a leaving age of 16, parity, or the abolition of fees in direct grant schools. War engendered consensus, which made reform possible, also required that it be uncontroversial.

The Act was neutral on the organisation of secondary education, thanks partly to Ede, but the officials' views had not changed and were reiterated in The Nation's Schools issued by the caretaker Conservative Government, but accepted by Ellen Wilkinson. The leaving age was not raised to 16 and parity between schools was not achieved. Thus the 1944 Act was a defeat for Labour.

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FOOTNOTE ABBREVIATIONS

B.L. British Library

G.L.C. Greater London Council Record Office

P.R.O. Public Record Office

T.H. Transport House, Labour Party Library

T.U.C. Trades Union Congress Library, Congress House

INTRODUCTION

The 1944 Education Act was regarded at the time of its enactment as a landmark in the development of education in England and Wales, and its passing was greeted with almost unanimous joy which came close to euphoria. This contemporary judgement has been endorsed by historians.[1] The Act was, however, far from being a radical measure. It perhaps owes its fame largely to the lack of any other social legislation of any consequence during the war. It was designed to be and was in fact no more than the embodiment of administrative arrangements which would bring order to a confused system, and some of which had been recommended and accepted as desirable during the previous two decades.

What were its achievements? All post-primary education was to be in schools governed under secondary regulations. Thus all-age schools were to be abolished and senior schools were to be governed by the same code as grammar schools. But this had been recommended by Hadow[2] in 1926, and the re-organisation of the senior classes of elementary schools into separate departments or schools was being implemented long before 1944 and was not completed for many years after that date. By 1937 almost half the children aged 11 and over in elementary schools were in departments already re-organised in Hadow terms. In 1960 there were still 1,281 all-age schools in which more than a quarter of a million children aged between 5 and 14 were being educated. The Act was thus no more than one step along a route plotted in the 1920s and still being trodden in the 1960s.[3]

One contribution of the Act to the solution of this problem was the increase in state finance for church schools. Butler's negotiating skills brought the two opposing attitudes in this long controversy, which had bedevilled educational reform for many decades, to a compromise which held during the legislative process. One side wanted to deny any state contribution to church schools except in return for state control; the

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1 E.g. A.J.P.Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, Oxford 1965, p.568; and H.C.Dent, 1870-1970, Century of Growth in English Education, London 1970, p.116

2 Board of Education Consultative Committee, The Education of the Adolescent, London 1926

3 Board of Education, Education in 1937, Cmnd.5776 p.13 and p.107. The Board claimed in 1937 at least 45.9% of pupils aged 11 and over in public elementary schools to be in re-organised senior departments; on the most favourable interpretation the figure was 61.5%. There were 666,147 children aged 11 and over in all-age schools, more than half of them in county schools, despite the belief that the remaining problem was concerned mainly with church schools. Ministry of Education, Education in 1960, Cmnd, 1439, p.151, Table II

other wanted church schools to be wholly financed by the state whilst remaining entirely in church control. Butler, faced with protagonists of 0% and 100% state subsidies for church schools, compromised at 50%. Butler's triumph,[4] though doubtless a sine qua non of progress in secondary re-organisation, was a testimony to his experience of diplomacy rather than his reforming zeal. And since the inability of the churches to raise funds for the capital costs of re-organisation had been considered before 1944 to have been the chief obstacle to further progress, it is interesting to note that in 1960, although the highest proportion of the children in all-age schools were in Roman Catholic schools, almost twice as many were in county as were in Anglican schools.[5]

The variety of local education authorities was to be lessened, but it was in any case inconceivable that the pre-war local authority structure, which included some very small education authorities, could have continued after the war. After 1944 there remained a great variety in the size of local education authorities and in the ratable values of their areas, so that very significant differences in educational expenditure remained. More than two decades after the passage of the Act, for example, each secondary school child in inner London had £32 spent on books and equipment in a year; the figure for children in outer London was only £22. Whereas some variation in educational expenditure, such as the decision of Richmond-upon-Thames to spend more than six times as much on its psychological services as nearby Kingston-upon-Thames, may be regarded as the exercise of a desirable local autonomy in such matters, the London capitation figures show a big disparity in expenditure on basic items which the re-organisation of education authorities in the Act had been expected to reduce.[6]

The raising of the leaving age to 15 was achieved in 1947, but this had been brought in by the 1936 Education Act in any case. The exemptions for 'beneficial employment', which would have allowed some

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4 M.Cruikshank,Church and State in English Education,London 1963, pp.137-169 chronicles the negotiations

5 Ministry of Education,Education in 1960,op.cit.,p.151,Table II; 127,041 pupils were in Roman Catholic schools,90,092 in county schools and 47,646 in Anglican schools

6 The figures are extracted from Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy,Education Estimates Statistics 1976-1977,London 1976, pp.8,28 and 24. The precise capitation figures were: Inner London Education Authority, £31.85; average of Outer London Boroughs, £21.73

pupils to leave school before the age of 15 if the outbreak of the war had not led to the abandonment of the earlier act, were dropped in 1944. Raising of the leaving age to 16 was not seriously envisaged by the authors of the Act and was not achieved until 1972-3.

The parity of buildings, staffing ratios and equipment between the three types of secondary school, which was regarded as desirable by all contributors to the debate over the content of the Act and which was an essential element in the justification of tripartism in secondary education, was not to be achieved. After 1944 variations in expenditure on these items were permitted if differences in curricula could be held to justify them. This justification therefore replaced the crude social distinctions of the pre-war period, but the result was the same. A survey of secondary modern schools in the 1950s found that some were still housed on the top floor of "three-decker" buildings, with juniors below them and infants at the bottom. Practical work was being done in huts, and in some cases pupils had to travel a mile or more for practical instruction. Many of these schools were in the charge of heads who were steeped in the traditions of the senior elementary school. H.C. Dent, who conducted the survey, commented, "Small wonder, then, that their schools did not rise much, if at all, above highly effective senior elementary work."[7] After 1944 ratios of pupils to teachers continued to reflect the greater importance attached to selective education, being 22.1 in modern schools, 18.5 in county grammar and technical schools and 18.2 in direct grant grammar schools in 1960.[8]

By the Act fees were to be abolished in aided grammar schools, but not necessarily in those receiving grants direct from the Board. A larger number of able children, from families which could not afford fees, were thus given places in grammar schools which previously would have been held by less able children from wealthier homes. In terms of social equality this was a gain. But direct grant grammar schools

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7 H.C.Dent, Secondary Modern Schools, An Interim Report, London 1958, pp.59-60; Dent's assessment was based on surveys conducted in 1952 and 1956

8 Ministry of Education, Education in 1960, op.cit., p.158 Table 6, and p.182 Table 28

remained as institutions which were socially as well as academically selective.[9]

The abolition of the special place examination was regarded as an important step forward. It was heralded in particular as a step which would remove a shadow from the primary school curriculum, but in practice it was replaced in many areas in the 1940s and 1950s, not by a consideration of primary school records supplemented if necessary by intelligence tests, as reformers had wanted, but by multiple choice examinations in English, mathematics and 'intelligence'. These examinations were usually timed and were held with some ceremony. The fact that little had changed is shown by the use of exactly the same argument as had been used against the special place examination before 1944 by campaigners for comprehensive schools in the 1950s and 1960s. Butler's White Paper of 1943 stated, "There is nothing to be said in favour of a system which subjects children at the age of 11 to the strain of a competitive examination... Apart from the effect on the children, there is the effect on the curriculum of the schools themselves".[10] Yet in 1966 a Labour Party organisation for educationists condemned the 11+ examination because, "The work of primary schools is distorted by the need to prepare pupils for the selection process at 11".[11] The following year the Plowden Report in its careful survey of primary education concluded that, "The less enterprising primary schools are what they now are partly, at least, because of the influence of the selective system." Inspectors had noted that, "the ill effects of selection in schools... were lessening, perhaps because teachers' estimates were tending to replace externally imposed attainment tests." Plowden welcomed the fact that with "the disappearance of formal selection arrangements, the work of the junior schools is liberated."[12] Thus in the 1960s the primary school curriculum still needed to be freed from a public examination taken

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9 A survey of all but one of the Headmasters' Conference Schools in England and Wales in 1964 showed that the fathers of 69% of entrants to non-boarding direct grant schools in membership of the Conference were in the Registrar-General's social classes I and II, i.e. professional and intermediate occupations, whereas in the population as a whole only 19% of men were in these categories
G.Kalton,The Public Schools: A Factual Survey,London 1966,p.35

10 Infra p. 187

11 Socialist Educational Association,Guide to Comprehensive Education, Leeds 1966,p.4

12 Central Advisory Council for Education(England),Children and their Primary Schools(2 vols)London 1966,vol.1,pp.153-154

at the age of 11. But the very considerations of equality which were on the tongues of reformers in the 1940s argued for these examinations, which were thought to be more objective than the reports of teachers who might admit social bias.

One other change made in 1944 was that the influence of the Board, or Ministry as it was re-named, was increased. But this was only a tilt in the balance of power between local and central government which still shared responsibility for education. It is true that after 1944 Ministers of Education had much greater powers to enforce standards on local authorities, but it was observed in 1964 that they had "not been the energetic despots which the Act suggests they might be."[13] The opinion expressed by Holmes, the Board's Secretary, in 1943 that, "The powers conferred on the Board by the Bill are terrific,"[14] would hardly have been shared by those Labour Secretaries of State for Education in the 1960s and 1970s who tried to persuade Conservative local authorities to introduce comprehensive secondary education and found that their initial expectation, that they could do this without special legislation, was ill-founded; the passage of the 1976 Education Act marked the end of that expectation. In any case, unlike the changes already noted, an increase in the power of central government was not even theoretically in Labour's interests in 1944. Until its electoral triumph in 1945 Labour had no reason to wish to see an increase in the influence of central government at the expense of local government, since it had shown much greater ability at winning control of large local authorities, notably the London County Council, that it had at winning general elections.

Labour's chief educational aim in 1944 was to ensure that there would be equality of opportunity in secondary education. It was concerned that differences of income and social attitude should no longer be important factors in determining the nature and quality of the education which children received. It was committed both by its annual conference,

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13 T.Burgess, A Guide to English Schools, Harmondsworth 1964, p.25
14 P.R.O.Ed136/377, Holmes to Rosevere, 4.11.43

representing the general view of party members, and by decision of its Education Advisory Committee, representing those most actively involved in considering educational problems, to a policy of multilateral schools as the means of achieving that aim.

It has been argued[15] that Labour's commitment to multilateral schools was less firm that this. Whilst the speed with which multilateral schools could be developed depended on resources, especially building, and whilst not all supporters of the policy were prepared to see an immediate replacement of the three types of secondary school even if that were possible in practical terms, the Labour Party was committed at all levels to a policy of multilateral schools.

The Party Conference in 1942 adopted unanimously a resolution which included a statement on multilateral schools. There can be no doubt about the importance of the resolution, which was one of five major resolutions outlining policies for post-war reconstruction, put to the Conference by the Party's National Executive Committee. As part of the clause on secondary schools the resolution called on the "Board to encourage, as a general policy, the development of a new type of multilateral school which would provide a variety of courses suited to children of all normal types."[16] The resolution was based on the interim report of the Education Reconstruction Committee. In the course of a short debate Alice Bacon, speaking for the N.E.C., emphasized the case for multilateral schools.[17] Members of the party's Education Advisory Committee saw R.A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, in February 1943 to put to him its comments on the Board's Green Book. They had previously submitted a paper which contained the same statement as in the 1942 Conference resolution[18] and again Alice Bacon, as one of the deputation, argued the case for multilateral schools.[19] The other Labour Party organisation chiefly

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15 R.S.Barker, The Educational Policies of the Labour Party 1900-1961, London PH.D, thesis 1968, p.218. Barker described Labour's commitment to a policy of multilateral secondary schools in these terms, "It was very far from being a lightening conversion nor, as the events of 1945-51 were to show, one that was completely secure from the dangers of back sliding." Barker's work was done before the Board of Education papers on the preparation of the Act were available. It is intended to establish by a study of those papers in the present work that the Board's officials conceived the war-time legislation as a consolidation of post-Hadow secondary re-organisation and that they were so successful in achieving their goal that only a well-informed and strong post-war minister would stand any change of altering the proposed course.

16 Labour Party, Report of Annual Conference, 1942, pp.140-1

17 Ibid., p.143

18 P.R.O.Ed136/266, Labour Party. Matters for Discussion with Rt.Hon. R.A.Butler, M.P.

concerned with education, the National Association of Labour Teachers, had long advocated a policy of multilateral school, and it reiterated its views in 1939.[20]

It is true that the parliamentary spokesmen of the Party in the Second Reading debate, Parker and Greenwood, made no reference to multilateral schools, but the Bill itself did not refer to types of secondary schools. This was one change from the White Paper of July 1943 which had referred to the three types of school. By leaving open the question of how secondary schools were to be organized, the Bill rendered pointless any parliamentary discussion of the matter. No Labour spokesman could move an amendment rejecting tripartism in favour of multilateralism, since the Bill did not refer to tripartism.

For good measure all bodies linked formally or informally to the Labour Party, except the Fabians whose attitude was ambivalent, declared themselves for multilateral schools. The Trades Union Congress, in submitting its views on the Green Book to Butler, asked that, "The Board should undertake really substantial experiments in the way of multilateral schools."[21] The Co-operative Union declared itself in favour of multilateral schools[22] and stated to Butler, "We are definitely in favour of the multilateral secondary school, as a new type to be developed... We feel State Education is best given in a 'common school', i.e. a school common to all those who are to become future citizens of the State."[23] The Workers' Educational Association, although accepting tripartism in terms of courses, nonetheless argued against the re-appearance of "sharp cleavages" and thought that, "The multilateral school... or at least some grouping of the three types of school on the same campus... may be the best way to insure against such divisions."[24]

It can be agreed, therefore, that there was a very substantial measure of agreement in the Labour Party and allied organizations in

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20 N.A.L.T. Social Justice in Public Education, London, undated, but it was a response to the Spens Report, which was published late in 1938, and is presumed to have been published in 1939

21 The statement first appears in T.U.C., Memorandum on Education after the War, London 1942, p.4. It also appears in the T.U.C. statement enclosed in P.R.O. Ed136/250, Citrine to Butler, 23.4.42

22 J. Thomas, Plans for an Educated Democracy, Manchester 1942, p.8

23 P.R.O. Ed136/256, Thomas (Director of Education, Co-operative Union) to Butler, 3.3.42, enclosing a statement, p.3

24 W.E.A., Plan for Education, London 1942, p.26. Its acceptance of tripartism in terms of courses was rather naive; grammar was equated with literary/scientific, modern with practical etc.

this matter. If there was agreement, there was also realism. It was clear that, for some years at least after the war, secondary schooling would have to take place in existing accommodation. Rebuilding of bomb-damaged schools and the building of some new schools would afford opportunities for realising the aim of multilateral schools, but there had to be policies which would in the meantime bring greater equality of opportunity to the de facto system of secondary schools. There had to be short-term improvements whilst local authority planning and school building programmes brought the longer-term policy closer to being implemented. Labour's lesser demand was therefore for egalitarianism in the tripartite system which already existed.

This meant that the school leaving age had to be raised to 16, not only because education per se was regarded as desirable, but also, and more importantly, because parity between three different kinds of secondary school was unattainable if one had an earlier leaving date than the others. Equality in the provision of buildings, books and equipment and in staffing ratios was essential. The abolition of fees in all state-aided schools, especially in direct grant schools if they were to take their place in local authority schemes, and the solution of the public school problem were also regarded as essential, although no clear policy on the latter existed. These goals were seen as an alternative, and less satisfactory, way of satisfying the principles of the multilateral policy. Whereas a system of multilateral schools in which all children throughout the county would receive their secondary education was the ideal, equality between three different kinds of secondary schools was the minimum acceptable.

Since neither was achieved in 1944, the Act must be regarded as a defeat for the Labour Party. It is the purpose of this work to

establish how and why that defeat came about and to consider why Labour spokesmen were persuaded to join the chorus of accolades for what was from a general viewpoint a rather modest Act and from a Labour viewpoint a serious defeat.

THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

Chapter 1:OBSTACLES TO LABOUR'S POLICIES

Before looking at the detail of the negotiations and political struggles leading to the passage of the Act, it is necessary to note the context in which these struggles took place. There were several factors hostile to the radical change which multilateralism implied.

'Official' opinion: the Spens Report

By 1939 official opinion had set hard against multilateral schools. That the advocates of such schools had made considerable progress in persuading educationists of all outlooks that the concept had merit was shown by the careful consideration given to the matter by the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education chaired by Sir Will Spens. He had chaired the committee since 1934 when he had taken over from Hadow. The committee had been asked in 1933 to look at secondary education, but its terms of reference directed its attention specifically to grammar and technical high schools. It had no responsibility at all to look at senior schools, which were governed by the elementary and not the secondary code of regulations, and could quite properly have ignored the growing interest in the entirely new structure of secondary schooling which the multilateral concept involved. Instead it carefully weighed the arguments, giving prominence to the topic in the introduction to its report[1] and at the beginning of the chapter in which it made its main proposals on the structure of secondary education. Multilateralists had made enough impact on educational opinion at least to be given a serious hearing.

When Spens reported in November 1938 he acknowledged that, "The policy of substituting such multilateral schools for Grammar Schools, for Modern (Senior) Schools, and, to some extent, for Junior Technical Schools, has recently been advocated and has received considerable support. It is a policy which is very attractive."[2] In particular

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1 Board of Education,Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education,London 1938; referred to hereafter as Spens Report

2 Ibid.,p.xx

the committee accepted the value of a "close association, to their mutual advantage, of pupils of more varied ability", and of the easier transfer from academic to less academic courses.[3]

Rejection of the multilateral school largely resulted from the esteem in which the members of the committee held the work and values of the grammar schools. Since the committee's instruction was to look at grammar schools and their curriculum it was natural that its most active members in this question should have been particularly concerned with grammar school and university education. Their objections to a multilateral system were based on a preference for small schools (a roll of 800 was considered much too large), a belief that a sixth form must not only be large to be viable but that it must represent a high proportion of the pupils in the school in order to be strong enough to exert its beneficial influence on younger pupils, a fear that the grammar school curriculum would dominate and destroy the modern school curriculum which was in its infancy, and a view that the breadth of work in a multilateral school would be too great for any one headmaster to direct.[4]

Spens rejected the idea even as a long-term aim, in view of the expense involved in the Hadow re-organisation of senior schools which was still incomplete, and because there was not "a substantial balance of advantage" in favour of a further re-organisation. The only comfort which multilateralists could draw from the report was its recommendation that some experiments should be conducted especially in new housing areas and that multilateral schools "ought almost certainly to be provided"[5] in cases where the grammar school was too small to be viable. The latter concession clearly indicates that the retention of the grammar school was the committee's chief concern, showing that where one could not exist in its own right its submergence in a multilateral school was tolerable.

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3 The inappropriateness of the grammar school curriculum to many fee-paying pupils who went to the school for reasons of status rather than because they had an aptitude for academic study was one of the committee's major concerns.

4 Spens Report, pp.xx-xxi

5 Ibid., p.xxii

The rejection was, however, far from dismissive. The idea itself was referred to as an "interesting and attractive proposal" which would confer "many benefits", and the decision to reject it was reached "with some reluctance."[6] Moreover the committee accepted the multilateralists' sociological critique of the existing system and also appreciated the difficulties caused by the misplacing of children who were consequently inappropriately educated. The existence of the problems which multilateral schools were designed to solve was admitted, even if a different approach to solving them was preferred. The members of the committee went further, for, having rejected a multilateral system in practice, they believed that the way forward lay in accepting the multilateral theory and applying it to a tripartite system. Its view was that, "The multilateral idea, though it may not be expressed by means of the multilateral school, should permeate the system of secondary education as we conceive it."[7] Spens used the arguments of the multilateralists to define more precisely the functions of the three types of schools and to suggest that selection should be solely by aptitude. It was urged that every school should "have its special educational task clearly in view" and, in noting the need for children to go to the right school, it emphasized the principle that "educational considerations alone should determine the parent's choice, just as if the different schools were alternative sides of the same school."[7] It was hoped to answer the sociological critique of the existing system by giving equality of opportunity to children, in the expectation that the public would regard the different schools as being of equal value if they were equally accessible and had parity in buildings, staffing ratios and equipment. Of prime importance to the achievement of parity was a common leaving age, and they considered that a minimum leaving age of 16 "must even now be envisaged as inevitable."[8] The committee

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6 Ibid.,p.291
7 Ibid.,p.292
8 Ibid.,p.311.The words quoted were emphasized with italics in the Report.

thus codified those educational reforms which were becoming common ground amongst many educational interests and which were in some measure to form the basis of the Bill in 1944.

The Spens Report considered thoughtfully the idea of a multilateral system, rejected it except in a few cases which it considered to be either experimental or inevitable, and then argued very strongly for the achievement of equality in educational opportunity. It recognised that the multilateralists' critique of the status quo could not be answered and that, if a multilateral system were not to be widely adopted, then at least some major reforms in the present system could not be avoided. The committee took their argument a stage further than the Labour Party and realised that a more precise definition of the educational purpose of each type of school would have to replace the largely social distinctions of the past. What for Labour was seen as the interim stage to a multilateral system was seen by Spens as a wider divergence between the types of post-primary school than hitherto. A more efficient and politically more defensible tripartite system was hardly likely to be the harbinger of a multilateral system.

The attitudes of the Board of Education's officials

Some of the Board's officials regarded the idea of a multilateral system with hostility. Indeed, although they were in 1940 and 1941 to modify their views under the influence of the wartime demand for change and of tactical and political considerations,[9] in 1938-9 they were hostile even to those less fundamental changes which Spens was prepared to countenance and even considered inevitable. Since the attitude of the Board's chief officers, who were to design the 1944 Bill, was in 1938 and 1939 uninfluenced by those factors which were to modify their view, and thus more truly represented their personal attitudes, it is important to note what their attitudes were.

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9 Infra, p 39

Its senior staffing structure made it difficult for the Board to think in terms other than those of the existing school system. The main advice came from principal assistant secretaries, three of whom were responsible for and therefore spent their daily lives organizing the three separate types of schools providing post-primary education. This inability to take a wider view was specially evident when the principal assistant secretaries did most of the work in preparation for the 1941 Green Book. As we shall see, the long dispute, initially over whether secondary education should be organized on multilateral or tripartite lines and later on whether there should be a common course for 11 to 13 year olds and whether that should be in multilateral or separate schools, had its basis in the unwillingness of principal assistant secretaries and their associated inspectors to accept any significant alterations in their particular sectors; for example, the head of secondary branch looked at the multilateral concept solely in terms of whether it would solve grammar school problems which were his daily concern.

In 1938-9, however, the Board's attitude, as shown in its reaction to Spens, was even simpler, since it set its face against any change. The President, De La Warr, received and accepted apparently without demur the advice of the Board's officers in a report presented to him by the Secretary, Sir Maurice Holmes in January 1939.[10] It conceded that some of Spens' criticisms of the status quo, especially of the influence of factors other than a child's ability and potential on the form of post-primary education which he received, could not be countered; and that, given no past history and no existing buildings, some of the recommendations could be readily accepted. But Holmes made the central feature of his report a quotation from a Treasury instruction that no department should spend money on new services. Before arguing in turn against each of the report's recommendations, he declared his opinion

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10 P.R.O.Ed136/131,Holmes to De La Warr,14.1.39

to be "almost uniformly adverse to acceptance" of them. He did not expect Spens to be surprised and quoted Spens himself as referring to the part of his report containing his proposals on secondary education as "the New Jerusalem chapter" - a label which the Board's officers were significantly to appropriate later for their Green Book.

Holmes specially rejected the Spens' approval of multilateral schools in sparsely populated areas. He scathingly dismissed as obscure Spens' reasons for approving the 1932 report of a Departmental Committee on the public schools and could see no reason for the Board to concern itself with such schools.[11] Equality between grammar and senior schools in size of classes and in the allocation of space to each child was rejected on grounds of cost. The proposal to raise the school leaving age was seen by Holmes as "by no means inevitable" (as Spens had suggested it was) and "a pious expression of opinion." In rejecting the proposal that all post-primary education should be covered by one code, he concerned himself not only with the administrative and financial difficulties, but also with the dilution of the grammar schools which he feared might result. Thus the rejection was more than the administrator's preference for leaving things as they were. It went further than a recognition of the financial obstacles to change. It showed a philosophical objection to the egalitarian assumptions of Spens.

Holmes urged De La Warr to reach a decision along these lines and to use a question, put down in the Commons by Chuter Ede and to be answered two weeks later, to announce the decision. This the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board, Kenneth Linsday, duly did. In February 1939 Lindsay told the Commons[12] that the Board would be discussing with local education authorities the "constructive recommendations" of Spens on four aspects of post-primary education, but could not adopt the "administrative proposals contained in Chapter IX,"

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11 Board of Education, Private schools and other schools not in receipt of grants from public funds. Report of the Departmental Committee, London 1932. The Committee had been established by the Labour President Sir Charles Trevelyan under the chairmanship of James Chuter Ede. Interestingly Holmes served on the Committee, for the report of which he now had so little regard

12 H.C.Debates, vol.343, col.372, 2.2.39

i.e. all of the proposals concerned with equality of opportunity and the restructuring of post-primary education, "for financial reasons."

There is no evidence to suggest that De La Warr and Lindsay contributed their own thoughts to the decision. Indeed the text of Holmes' note tends to suggest that De La Warr had not even asked for advice, and that Holmes was moved to submit it by the increasing number of requests for a government reaction to Spens, of which Chuter Ede's question was the most important and imminent and the least easy to avoid. Until R.A. Butler became President and Chuter Ede Parliamentary Secretary, the Board's officers seem to have had no respect for their political leaders and no need to have much regard for their views. It is therefore Holmes' attitude to Spens which was important. His rejection of Spens was a defence of the grammar school, albeit with admissions based on academic potential rather than on social factors. His attitude is clearly shown in his reply to a letter from the Headmaster of Winchester College, Spenser Leeson, who was a close acquaintance of Holmes and was the leading figure at this time in the relations between the Board and the Head Masters' Conference. Leeson had expressed the fears of direct grant schools about a loss of independence in the wake of the Spens Report, which had in fact recommended that such schools should for the time being be omitted from any schemes for the implementation of its proposals.[13] Holmes replied, "You need have no fear that we here will take any steps to impair the independence of the direct grant schools."[14]

Holmes' advice was overridden in only one case and even then he had his own way in the end. When he held the discussions with the local education authorities which Lindsay had told the Commons about in February, he prevailed upon them not to approve action on the questions which they were asked to consider; even such a small advance as the inspection of private schools was not approved. At Holmes' instigation

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13 Spens Report, p.326
14 P.R.O.Ed136/131, Holmes to Leeson, 31.5.39

decisions were reached with very little debate to reject even the four minor proposals which one of Holmes' political heads had led the Commons to believe were at least to be seriously considered.[15] The local authorities did take up one question which had not been referred to them. They considered Spens' limited recommendation about the formation of multilateral schools by the combination of small grammar and senior schools, and, whilst not going as far as Spens, urged that for reasons of "economy of building provision" such schools should share the same gymnasia and playing fields. When De La Warr read Holmes' report of the meeting he instructed that differences in regulations and teachers' salaries (Holmes' reasons which had persuaded the local authorities) should not be grounds for not adopting the best solutions in such areas, and that the Board should look out for opportunities to avoid duplication in buildings and amenities.[16]

That very limited adoption of the multilateral idea, for reasons of economy and viability rather than positive educational development, was all that was salvaged in the short term from Spens. In practical terms it meant nothing, for the outbreak of war was near. What is of interest is the way in which Holmes nullified even this instruction from the President. His circular to inspectors,[17] in which he was supposed to be alerting them to the possibilities that the President had in mind, tacitly scorned the proposal of his political head. It laid down pre-conditions which were very unlikely to exist; for example, neither school was to exceed one stream and there was to be no risk of friction between the teachers of the two schools. Holmes thus killed what remained of Spens' modest proposal on multilateral schools. The episode demonstrated the administrator's skill in not carrying out the wishes of his political superior.

Until the arrival of Butler and Ede, the Board was in effect

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15 Ibid.,Minutes of meeting of Local Education Authorities' Advisory Committee,30.6.39
16 Ibid.,De La Warr to Holmes,20.7.39
17 P.R.O.Ed22/214,Memorandum to Inspectors,E.No.409,29.7.39

beyond political and parliamentary control or indeed influence. Holmes was its controller and he showed no desire in the late 1930s and early 1940s to countenance the assumption by the Board of a more dynamic role. He was content to administer the existing system. Inasmuch as he showed his opinions on educational policies, he was clearly allied to public school, direct grant school and grammar school interests. Since Butler and Ede did not arrive at the Board until after publication of the Green Book, Holmes' role in policy-making for the 1944 Bill was of the greatest importance.

The political context: consensus

The political context of the late 1930s and early 1940s was hostile to radical educational change. The National Governments of the 1930s and Churchill's war coalition of the 1940s stifled the controversies which must precede attempts to change anything so difficult to change as a schools system. Before the outbreak of war it was accepted in almost every political corner that the country's economy and later the demands of rearmament would not permit an increase in expenditure on education. Had an increase been possible, it would have been used to continue the Hadow re-organization of all-age elementary schools to provide separate senior schools, which had been in hand since the 1920s. When the war started the initial pre-occupation of educationists was with ensuring that evacuated city children received any education at all. After this initial period many turned their attention to the need for educational reform, and it was this upsurge of opinion which led people at the time to believe that great changes were in the offing.

Yet the only major public controversy was not over education at all, but over the demand of the churches, and especially the Roman Catholic church, for greater public financial assistance towards church schools without any loss of church control. This controversy had special significance for the Labour Party, as will be seen, but it was a diversion

which inhibited and took the place of educational discussion rather than carried it forward. Chuter Ede, winding up the debate on the Second Reading of the 1944 Bill for the Government, opened his remarks by apologizing ironically to the Deputy Speaker, "... if in the course of my remarks I should, unobtrusively, at irregular and infrequent intervals, say a few words about education..."[18] An acrimonious public quarrel over the relationship between religion and education, and more particularly over the financing of denominational schooling, was no substitute for a political and educational debate over the future structure of the educational system. The fact that the quarrel took place and that the 1944 Bill survived did not mean that the Act itself was a major measure of educational reform.

Consensus on the proposals in Spens, most of which were also part of the Labour Party's programme, was the order of the day. By 1941, when the Green Book was published, these proposals were common-place. Dessenting voices were for the most part interested bodies such as the Part III local education authorities and the direct grant schools. This pressure towards consensus was increased by the war. It was widely believed by 1943, and to some extent even earlier, that only compromise based on the spirit of conciliation encouraged by the war would ensure the enactment of a bill and that, once the war was over, the chance to make a major educational reform would be lost. Many writers were conscious of what they saw as the lesson of Fisher's Act, which had been passed in 1918 and which many believed would not have been passed in 1919 or later. The publication of Fisher's autobiography[19] encouraged this view. R.H. Tawney put the point starkly to the W.E.A. conference in 1943, when he said, "Either his [Butler's] promised Education Bill will become an Act before the end of the war, or it will never become one."[20] H.G.Wells made the same point in

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18 H.C.Debates,vol.396,col,484,20.1.44

19 H.A.L.Fisher,An Unfinished Autobiography,London 1940

20 His presidential address was published as R.H.Tawney,Education: The Task Before Us,London 1943

more detail at a meeting with Butler, arguing that even Forster's Act of 1870 would not have been passed if Britain had not felt threatened by Prussia.[21] It was this fear, that unless an act were passed quickly no act at all would reach the statute book, that encouraged consensus on proposals which by this time were no longer controversial. Writers with Labour Party associations were especially conscious of this anxiety. The result was a remarkable identity in the suggestions coming from many writers, politicans and organisations. H.C.Dent, editor of the Times Educational Supplement and author of an unashamedly propagandist work on Butler's Bill, seems to have been prominent in synthesising these proposals.[22]

The inhibiting effect of this need for agreement on a common set of proposals can be seen in the programme of the Council for Educational Advance, a body set up for the very purpose of promoting consensus on a limited number of reforms. Its publications show how conscious its sponsors were that all might be lost if sectarian problems were allowed to assume greater importance than strictly educational goals. They were concerned above all with carrying reforms which already commanded very wide support. Whilst the Council criticized the Government's White Paper proposals, claiming that "the Government is in far more danger of being blamed for timidity than rashness",[23] the Council itself did not go much further in its demands. Although sponsored by the T.U.C., the Co-operative Union, the W.E.A. and the N.U.T., the Council did not refer to multilateral schools in this or other campaign publications.[24] Since the first three organisations wanted multilateral schools, their omission was presumably the price to be paid for N.U.T. participation, since the N.U.T.'s 1942 Conference decision on the content of a new Education Bill had contained no reference to multilateral schools, in spite of much support for them within the union.[25]

The prevailing atmosphere was well-described by Sir Frederick Clarke,

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21 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Butler to Holmes,3.10.41

22 H.C.Dent,The New Education Bill, What it contains, what it means, why it should be supported,London 1944

23 Council for Educational Advance,A Statement on the White Paper on Educational Reconstruction,London undated (?1943)

24 E.g.C.E.A.,Aims,London undated (?1943)

25 N.U.T.,Report of Proposals by the Executive, adopted by Conference, Easter 1942,Cheltenham 1942

Director of the London University Institute of Education. When expressing his congratulations on Butler's speech in the Commons debate on the White Paper, he wrote, "I am beginning to feel that you have achieved something I had long hoped for, the formation of a kind of non-political unofficial Education Party."[26] Such a consensus could not be wide enough to include all of Labour's social and political objectives.

Labour's parliamentary problem

Another problem for Labour was its division in Parliament. Several of its leading figures were members of Churchill's war government from its formation in May 1940. This silenced them as Labour spokesmen and required them to vote with the government in the event of a division in the Commons. Labour's strength in the Commons was thus reduced. If, as A.J.P. Taylor has suggested, the Parliamentary Labour Party revolted only once during the war (over the Beveridge proposals), this would have been of no consequence. But Taylor's view does not take into account the divisions during the Committee stage of the 1944 Bill. He has written that Labour "revolted for the only time in the war" over the government's half-hearted response to the Beveridge Report, and that, with all Labour M.Ps. except those in office and only two others voting against the government, they mustered 121 votes.[27] This was certainly not the only revolt by Labour, for the Party divided the Commons twice in Committee on the Education Bill and, by supporting an amendment on equal pay for men and women teachers moved by a maverick Conservative member, Mrs. Cazalet Keir, actually took part in the defeat of the government. On the two occasions when Labour divided the House - on the questions of a timetable for raising the school-leaving age to 16[28] and the abolition of fees in direct grant schools, which were of great importance in Labour's programme - the Party mustered only 137

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26 P.R.O.Ed136/450,Clarke to Butler,31.7.43

27 A.J.P.Taylor,op.cit.,p.567

28 The amendment on which the vote in fact took place was also moved by the Conservative Mrs. Cazalet Keir, but it was supported by Labour M.Ps.en bloc.

and 95 votes respectively and lost badly.

Since Labour, even with its full parliamentary strength at the disposal of the Whips, could not command a majority in the Commons, it might have been a good bargain to have lost the votes of some M.Ps. in return for a voice in the cabinet. Churchill divided his government firmly between the very small War Cabinet, which he dominated and which determined policy for the prosecution of the war, and a committee chaired by the Lord President of the Council which controlled domestic affairs. Churchill took no part in the latter, although it is clear, from the way in which Butler took the precaution of at least mentioning potentially difficult questions to him directly whilst the Bill was being prepared, that his dominant role included a concern with potentially troublesome domestic legislation, although this may equally have reflected the young minister's desire to keep himself in the Prime Minister's eye. However, the Lord President's Committee, as it was called, had to approve all legislation and Butler's proposals were considered by it at several meetings.

It was a small committee and Labour was strongly represented. When Butler first outlined his scheme to them in December 1942 three of the six members were Labour, viz. Attlee, Bevin and Morrison. In September 1943 Attlee became Lord President of the Council. There is little evidence to suggest that these prominent Labour figures used their influential position to promote Labour's education policies. Bevin, as Minister of Labour, put strong pressure on Butler to plan for the raising of the school-leaving age to 16 soon after the war,[29] but he seems not to have carried his struggle into the Lord President's Committee, the deliberations of which on the planned legislation were in any case slight.

Nor does Labour seem to have drawn strength from its obviously

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29 Infra., Chapter 6 passim

increasing electoral popularity before and during the war. Since the 1935 general election, the last to be held until 1945, Labour had had a notable series of by-election victories and these continued during the war, confirming the general and evident enthusiasm for change. Whilst such a strong and obvious trend was no substitute for a majority in the division lobbies, it might have encouraged Labour members to press their more radical proposals more vigorously.

The relations of Chuter Ede with Board and party colleagues

James Chuter Ede was appointed Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education in May 1940. As a Labour member of Churchill's coalition government and the spokesman for a party which lacked parliamentary strength, he was theoretically well placed to promote Labour's aims.

His past experience was helpful to him to a remarkable degree in discharging his new duties. Born at Epsom in Surrey in 1882 he had been deeply involved throughout his adult life in the public affairs of that area, especially in the field of education. His own education showed a determination to benefit from the best that was available to a boy from a family which was comfortable without being wealthy. From Epsom National Schools he went on to Dorking High School and Battersea Pupil Teacher Centre before entering Christ's, Cambridge. Thereafter he returned to the area of his birth and upbringing, living at Ewell throughout the Second World War. He was a member of Surrey County Council continuously from 1914 and its chairman from 1933 until 1937. As a teacher he was deeply involved in N.U.T. affairs and for much of the 1930s and 1940s, including his period as Parliamentary Secretary, he remained assistant secretary of the Union's Surrey branch. His diary in the early 1940s contains many references to discussions on matters arising from his N.U.T. office. First elected to the Commons in March 1923 for the Mitcham Division, he was elected as member for South Shields in 1929, losing his seat there in 1931, but recovering

it in 1935, being one of the additional 102 Labour victors at that election.

The memoranda written by him at the Board and the many references in his diaries show an impressive grasp of the legislation and regulations governing Britain's school system. He was no amateur thrust into office without experience of the topic for which he was to assume some responsibility. He had had experience of working within the framework of the Board's procedures when he had chaired the Departmental Committee on private schools in 1932, one member of which was Maurice Holmes, now the Board's Secretary. Few men, and certainly not his senior colleague Butler, have come to office with such long experience relevant to their future responsibilities. Yet Ede had problems in his relations with both Board and party colleagues.

The office of Parliamentary Secretary was a decidedly junior one, and Ede would probably have had no influence at all but for his evident knowledge and experience. His relations with Butler were good. The President was later to refer to Ede as a "consistently loyal and wise friend."[30] Even allowing for the liberality with which Butler awarded accolades in his memoirs to all who worked with him at the Board, the tribute sounds sincere. But the two men do not seem to have been intimate. The relationship grew, especially as they worked successfully to evolve a formula which was acceptable to the non-conformists who were courted by Ede, and to the Anglicans, who were courted by Butler, and which formed the basis of the 1944 Act's arrangements for dealing with church schools. Yet the relationship remained that of professional colleagues rather than intimates, with Ede's occupying the subordinate post.

One problem for Ede was that he was the outsider at the Board. His background was quite different from Butler's and those of the

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30 R.A.Butler, The Art of the Possible, London 1971, p.93

Board's officials. It was not a question of their not having regard for his views. His knowledge ensured that points made by him had to be taken seriously. It was more a question of his different way of life. The other contributors to the Board's policy had many things in common. Many of them had worked closely together in the past, been pupils or students together, or belonged to the same club. Ede's was a different world. The centre of his interests was undoubtedly Surrey. Bereft of the references to his work at the Board, his diaries would read like those of a suburban professional man, full as they are of local engagements, spells of fire-watching, walks on the Downs and Saturday morning shopping. Having been to an elementary school, he had won his way to Cambridge, not claimed a place there as his birthright. London club life was a closed book to him, and from all that one knows of him one can believe that he would not have wished it to be otherwise. He lunched at the Wilton or St. Ermine's Hotel, not far from the Board's war-time offices. It is rare for his diary to record the name of a lunch companion and he seems to have been alone on most occasions, or at least not in the company of one of his Board colleagues. Indeed in his diary he mentions his visits to the Board in the same tone as he does his visits to Surrey County Hall or his local magistrates' court. He was certainly not in the very centre of policy-making, except in the question of church schools and the Part III local authorities.

Ede's working relations with those of his fellow Labour Party members who were most concerned with education were not close. Ede regretted, even resented this. Being excluded from membership of the Party's Advisory Committee, by the rule which denied membership to ministers with a direct responsibility for the matter, annoyed him.[31] Temperamentally, however, he would not have worked well with them,

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31 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,13.10.41

seeing himself as a practical man tackling real problems and not as an intellectual. He freely commented to Butler that members of the Advisory Committee were "far removed from the working class parents' attitude" (the issue was religious education),[32] and he recorded without comment in his diary the opinion of Lees-Smith, one of his Labour predecessors, that they were "a collection of freaks."[33] When Tawney went to America, Ede advised Butler that, in his absence, Laski would "probably best represent the views of the so-called intelligentsia of the Labour movement on educational problems."[34] This was hardly a warm recommendation, and Ede showed on other occasions serious disagreement with prevalent Labour opinions, seeing no objection, for example, to the purchase by parents of a better education, the opposite of Tawney's view.[35] It is possible that he resented the social standing of some Labour leaders, for he often made comments about the snobbery of some of his fellow Party members. Although he made no comment, one senses his pleasure when he recorded in his diary an observation of Tawney's that, "He often felt, when lecturing on history to some students, that he was only spoiling good navvies."[36] When Mrs. M.A. Hamilton, daughter of the Glasgow Professor of Logic and a former Labour M.P. who was now working in Greenwood's reconstruction secretariat, submitted her comments on the Green Book, the burden of which was that she wanted children from different backgrounds to attend the same school, he endorsed the paper, "no snob like her."[37] When he reported to Butler on his meeting with her he was at pains to show how he had made a fool of her by displaying his superior knowledge of educational law and regulations.[38] Such open contempt for party colleagues is not isolated. Later, in an account of a conversation he had had with Aneurin Bevan, in which the rising member for Ebbw Vale had stated that problems emanating from party demands for

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32 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.6,13.7.42
33 Ibid.,vol.6,14.7.42
34 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,9.9.41
35 Infra ,p .165
36 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,22.1.43
37 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Paper by M.A. Hamilton,23.7.41
38 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,6.8.41

contested elections would be "endemic", Ede replied to Bevan that he "recognised that was his long word for the day."[39] A dislike of snobbery did not extend to denying himself the advantages in debate of a better education than that of an adversary. Nor did it make him sympathetic to more recently established institutions of learning which were trying to establish their reputations in competition with the ancient seat of learning which he himself attended. Some of these universities, including Reading, Southampton and Exeter, were dismissed as "little more than teacher training colleges."[40] One story told about him was that he had argued at a N.A.L.T. Conference that race horse-owners should be allowed to take advantage of the beneficial exemption clauses of the 1936 Education Act.[41] By these clauses certain young workers were exempted from the main effect of the Act, which was to raise the leaving age to 15. The Act was in the event prevented from coming in to force by the outbreak of war in 1939, but the story shows how Ede was suspected of abandoning Labour's aim of raising the leaving age for all pupils as a result of his identification with interests local to his home area which were certainly not working class, whilst Tawney and others were campaigning vigorously against the principle of exemptions.[42] This isolation from his party's educational spokesmen in the Advisory Committee extended to the National Association of Labour Teachers. Not highly regarded by those prominent in the Association's affairs, he kept his eye on developments within the Association through his Surrey N.U.T. colleague, J.V. Strudwick, who was a member of N.A.L.T.'s Executive Committee. Perhaps his lack of regard for N.A.L.T. and the Advisory Committee was partly a response to their attitude towards him, but there was also a difference in political outlook. He was irritated by what he regarded as their undue pessimism and their failure to understand the burdens of office, agreeing to address a London N.A.L.T. meeting in order to undo the

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39 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,24.2.43
40 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,17.9.41
41 E.Denington,Secretary of N.A.L.T., interviewed by the present writer,10.3.77
42 Vide W.E.A./R.H.Tawney,What is Beneficial Employment?,London 1938

"pessimistic work Cove has been doing."[43] When party discipline was threatened he was amongst those who wrote to Attlee, urging that a firm stand should be made against rebels.[44] He was proud that he could claim to have voted in every one of the 1,005 Commons divisions during the life of the second Labour government.

Labour's voice at the Board was thus that of a man who had great experience and knowledge, but who was not the intimate of either his colleagues at the Board or those of his fellow party members who were most keenly interested in education. He was to form a successful working association with his senior ministerial colleague and was to serve the Board well as a link with the non-conformists and the teachers, but his relations with his party colleagues were to present problems in the promotion of party policies.

The denominational question

The controversy over the dual system - the one enormous and unavoidable obstacle to the introduction of a bill and a major cause of delay in 1942 and 1943 - presented peculiar difficulties for the Labour Party. Not only did it threaten to make a new act before the end of the war unlikely, but it also divided and weakened the party, and had the effect of making it join the consensus already noted. There was almost a 'run for cover', a need to be part of a non-controversial, non-sectarian, even non-party consensus.

The Conservative Party had to face the same problem of voters and M.Ps. who were as much members of a church as they were supporters of a political party. In its case the church in question was for the most part the Church of England, which came to terms with the government quite quickly. Although the Conservative M.P., Henry Brooke, spoke frequently during the Committee stage of the Bill in order to improve the Anglicans' side of the bargain which had been struck

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43 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.6,12.7.42. Cove was a Labour M.P. and leading member of N.A.L.T. Vide p.68

44 A.Bullock,The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin (2 vols.),vol.2, London 1967,p.233

before the introduction of the Bill, there was no longer any party problem for the Conservatives.

Labour's problem was much more acute, for a high proportion of its M.Ps. were either non-conformist or Roman Cathalic themselves or represented areas where the population was predominantly one or the other. The former had the grievance of single-school areas, i.e. village elementary schools which were usually Anglican and to which perforce non-conformist parents had to send their children in spite of their antipathy to the denominational teaching and ethos. The latter, having adopted the view that all denominational Roman Catholic schools should be wholly financed by the state whilst the priest kept control, denounced any proposal which fell short of this as a special levy on Catholic parents and an attack on liberty of conscience. The vulnerability of Labour M.Ps. to pressure from the Roman Catholic authorities had been a significant factor in the failure of Trevelyan's Bill in 1931. Then Labour M.Ps., confronted by a campaign waged principally by Archbishop Downey of Liverpool, had been issued with a directive to avoid giving any pledges. Much to Trevelyan's annoyance many did not feel strong enough to hold such a line.[45] Downey was still installed at Liverpool and took a prominent part in the negotiations of the 1940s.

A pre-war dispute in Liverpool had again highlighted the problem for Labour and was fresh in people's memories as the campaign for educational reform gathered support in the early 1940s. The Labour-controlled local education authority was faced with the problem of many black-listed schools, more than half of which were Roman Catholic. It had tried to hasten the re-organization of its schools by using the 1936 Education Act, which authorized the payment of grants by councils to church school bodies in order to facilitate the raising of the

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45 D.W.Dean, 'The difficulties of a Labour Educational Policy: The Failure of the Trevelyan Bill,1929-31',British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.XVII,no.3,October 1969,pp.293-299

leaving age to 15, to finance the rebuilding of Roman Catholic schools in the city. The Conservatives had responded by conducting their municipal election campaign in November 1937 on the basis of the slogan, "No grants to denominational schools" and they had won. The dispute had national significance and was widely reported. The identity between Labour Party supporters and adherents of the Roman Catholic faith in this area was evident, and yet no electoral advantage had resulted. These events had their impact on the party. Such a "Morton's fork" was to be avoided if at all possible.[46]

A recurrent feature of the Committee proceedings of the Bill was an internecine Labour battle over this question, with several back-bench members - notably Stokes and Tinker - seizing every opportunity to move amendments which would increase state aid to Roman Catholic schools, and non-conformist Labour M.Ps. warning the government that further concessions to the Catholics would provoke a revolt from their quarter. Stokes and Tinker had much more to say in Committee than most other Labour M.Ps., including the party's front bench spokesmen. Similarly the Welsh Labour M.Ps. acted as a defence association for the non-conformist position as much as they stood for Labour's educational programme.

The prominence of the denominational question thus presented an acute problem for Labour and made it nervous of promoting any educational proposal which did not command wide support outside the party. As an instrument for change the Labour Party was therefore gravely weakened.

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The conditions for the achievement of radical reform, such as was implied by the Labour policy of promoting multilateral schools instead of secondary education segregated into three parts, were thus unpropitious. Spens and the Board's officials were opposed to it. Labour's

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46 P.R.O.Ed136/145 contains papers on the Liverpool dispute.

parliamentary position, its vulnerability to schism on the church school question and the relations between its minister at the Board and its educational leadership all detracted from the party's effectiveness as an agency of reform. In addition the grouping of reformers around a set of policies upon which all could agree limited the scope for change. On the other hand Labour was in the government, albeit as a junior partner, there was a strong and widely-admitted desire for social change, and Labour was evidently increasing its electoral popularity. If there were difficulties in achieving the fundamental change in secondary education policy which multilateral schooling entailed, there seemed every chance that by the end of the war legislation would have been passed to guarantee equality between the three existing types of secondary school in terms of staffing, building, access and length of school life. If there were obstacles to the fulfilment of Labour's objectives, hopes for progress were high. Describing the atmosphere of 1940 as a "ferment", H.C. Dent commented that, "In 1941 the ferment spread rapidly."[47] Optimism was in order.

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47 H.C.Dent, Education in Transition, London 1944, p.163

Chapter 2:THE MAKING OF THE GREEN BOOK

Two main problems arise from a consideration of the Green Book, Education After the War - the contribution of the Board's officers to the policy-making which culminated in the 1944 Act: to what extent was it not only the starting point for discussions but in some measure the limit on all subsequent discussion, and why did the Board's officers take so much trouble in their attempts to maintain the confidentiality of their report?

Butler has recorded in his memoirs his view that the Green Book "did stimulate thinking about educational reform" even though "many of [its] proposals, notably those to do with the knotty problem of the Church schools, did not survive exposure."[1] This view cannot be sustained by a perusal of the Board's papers.[2]

The Board's officers began their preparation of the Green Book because there was already much thinking about educational reform, the drift of which they did not like, and their aim was to channel and confine this thinking, not to stimulate it further. The problem of the church schools was the only major issue, not the most notable of many such issues, on which the educational system after 1944 differed in any substantial way from the proposals in the Green Book, the authors of which underestimated the strength of the church lobbies. The evidence suggests, however, that they were more successful in gauging the strength of the political and educational lobbies.

Nor can the secrecy which the Board's Secretary tried to maintain about its proposals be dismissed by quoting approvingly, as Butler does, Professor W.O.Lester Smith's famous phrase about the Book's having been "distributed in such a blaze of secrecy that it achieved an unusual degree of publicity".[3] The aim of this secrecy was to reach agreement with the professional elements in the

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1 R.A.Butler,The Art of the Possible,London 1971,p.93
2 P.R.O.Ed136/212 is the main file concerned with the officers' drafting of the Green Book
3 Quoted in R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.93. The quotation is from W.O.Lester Smith,To Whom Do Schools Belong?,London 1942,p.155

education service - the teachers, the local authorities and the education officers - and to present a fait accompli to politicians who would thus be prevented from participating in the policy-making. Even these consultations were to be on the basis of a firm line already having been agreed, for the Board's officers did not generally hold the other sections of the education service in very high regard, one of them lamenting "the low average level of Directors of Education at present."[4] The aim, in Holmes' words, was to ensure that the local authorities and teachers "should not go off on lines which appear to us to be unsound."[5]

The process of drafting the Green Book excluded all political influence. The President and Parliamentary Secretary did not contribute to it. The Board's officers had exceedingly favourable conditions in which to make policy. The beginning of their work coincided with the evacuation to a hotel in Bournemouth late in 1940 of all the chief contributors. Only the Deputy Secretary, Robert S. Wood, and the President's private office remained with the ministers in the Kingsway, London offices of the Board. Thus the gulf between the political heads of the Board and its chief officers was not only personal, but also physical. Wood occasionally contributed to the debate, sometimes with the resigned air of one who knows that he is not in the right place consistently to influence major developments, but on no occasion does his role seem to have been to convey the views of the ministers to whom he was close; certainly there is no written evidence that he ever did so, for when he did submit papers it was clearly on his own behalf and often because of the particular experience which his former post as Head of Technical Branch (1936-1940) had given to him.

It was the Deputy Secretary's namesake, S.H. Wood, later described by Butler as the civil servant "who kept us on the progressive path,"[6]

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4 P.R.O.Ed136/212,Note by D.Du B.Davidson,the Board's Accountant General,6.11.40
5 Ibid.,Holmes to Sir George Chrystal,24.1.41
6 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.93

who took the initiative in setting up committees to formulate policies.[7] Holmes accepted S.H.Wood's proposals and in November 1940 arrangements were made to evolve a policy.

What must be emphasized is the narrowness of the question which the participants set out to answer. It was, "Accepting the principle of Day Continuation Schools, what should be the school leaving age and what should be the educational breaks during school life?"[8] The question was thus the length of compulsory secondary schooling. There were to be sporadic attempts to argue that there was really no need to change the existing regulations, which were different for grammar, technical and senior elementary schools, but in reality the case for a single code covering all post-primary schooling was accepted. Similarly the general case for the abolition of fees was accepted. But the implications for the future pattern of post-primary education of the main question were profound. The argument over whether differentiated secondary education should begin at 11 or 13 was an argument between those who believed in a sound general education for all pupils and those who believed that specialisation must begin early; it was an argument between those who wanted and those who did not want selection and segregation. At the other end of the secondary school age range the argument over whether the leaving age should be raised to 15 or 16 was really about whether one of the distinguishing features of the senior elementary school, and one which contributed to its lowly status, viz. the shorter course which it offered, was to be eliminated.

These key policy matters were all involved in what Holmes, in a reference to the aims of the Green Book, was later to describe disingenuously as "an administrative approach to the problem of planning."[9] In fact the Board's officers worked out this administrative framework without having been set any political objectives. For the most part, and with exceptions that we shall consider, they based their thinking

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7 P.R.O.Ed136/212,Note by S.H.Wood, undated

8 Ibid.,Minute of meeting on 16.11.40

9 Board of Education,Education after the war,London 1941,p.6; hereafter referred to as the Green Book
P.R.O.Ed136/214 contains a copy of the Green Book

on past principles: in particular the Hadow principle of re-organizing the upper parts of elementary schools to provide the secondary education for the majority of children, and the 1936 Education Act's decision (set aside for the duration of the war) to raise the leaving age to 15. The Board's officers in general were not thinking in terms of major advances, let alone major changes in policy.

That the Board's officers saw themselves as policy-makers faute de mieux, since they were without political directives from their political heads, is not open to doubt. Few Presidents had recently exercised much influence over the Board. Harold Laski was to approve of Butler, when he had been in office for less than two years, simply because he was "the first in his office who was not a transient and embarrassed phantom."[10] In fact in the nineteen years between the resignation of Fisher in 1922 and the appointment of Butler in 1941 there had been eleven tenancies of the presidency, and in general they had not been highly regarded by professional educationists.[11] The longest-serving of them, Lord Eustace Percy, told a story in an after-dinner speech in 1929 about "an old and respected schoolmaster" who had said to him, "My dear boy, I am glad to see you in this position. I once played bridge with a President and a Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Education. Neither of them knew anything about education, and one of them did not even know anything about bridge."[12]

It must also be noted however that there is no evidence of the officers' ever having sought political directives. In summoning the first meeting of the groups which were to plan the Green Book, Holmes noted the work which many bodies were doing to prepare their recommendations on post-war educational reconstruction and observed, "I think this is a matter in which the Board should lead rather than follow."[13] He

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10 P.R.O.Ed136/266,Memorandum of Labour Party deputation to Butler, 25.2.43

11 Charles Trevelyan had been President twice, as had E.F.L.Wood, although Wood was known as Lord Irwin and then Viscount Halifax during his second term of office

12 Speaking to Institute of Certified Grocers at Hotel Cecil,London; reported in Manchester Guardian,15.2.29,p.10

13 P.R.O.Ed136/212,Note by Holmes,5.11.40

foresaw that at a later stage some representative committee might be set up to evaluate all of these policy statements and that, should this occur, the Board should have ready its own views on what it wanted to happen. His memorandum is explicit. Their work was to formulate "our own views as to the educational changes which we should like to see in a post-war world."

R.S.Wood argued in addition that, for their views to be accepted in the political climate after the war, and not rejected in favour of more radical solutions, the Board should recognise how far they might have to go to accommodate the demand for change which the war had stimulated. In a note to Holmes,[14] remarkable for its insight into the radicalism which the war had inspired and for its forecast in 1940 of the Labour electoral landslide in 1945, he raised the spectre of the Board's advice being rejected. "There is good reason", he wrote, "to think that our masters will not be content to rely solely on the advice of officials: advice will also be sought from persons outside, and it is not difficult to guess some who may be included in their number. At some stage these persons may be brought into association with officials or they will be asked to review official schemes... Mean and meagre planning will be disregarded and official views discounted, and others will be asked to design the 'New Jerusalem'." Lest it be thought that Wood was arguing in favour of the civil servants putting themselves in the van of educational reform, it must be stressed that he was concerned with the maintenance of their position as the controllers of educational policy-making. He wanted them to embrace the ideas of change only insofar as this was necessitated by the need to stave off the intrusion of 'outsiders', viz. politicians. He emphasized that he was not arguing that they should "knock down our edifice and start rebuilding afresh." An example of this hostility to 'outsiders' was the uninhibited attack on the W.E.A. made by Holmes in

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14 Ibid.,Note by R.S.Wood,Policy and Planning for Post-War Education dated 17.1.40,but must in fact be 17.1.41; P.R.O.Ed136/217 contains another copy and the date on this has been altered to 17.1.41

January 1941 when he learned that a deputation had seen Greenwood as Minister without portfolio. "I am shocked to learn that Greenwood and Chrystal have received a deputation from the W.E.A., of all bodies," he wrote to Ramsbotham.[15] His shock was that ministers should "give ear to everybody that has some grievance to air or some axe to grind," adding ironically, "God forbid that it should be thought that the views of officials have any particular validity." R.S.Wood explained that "Chrystal's office... is becoming the repository of all the ideas of every crank in the country."[16] It is worthy of note that the deputation of four, whose audacious attempt to influence the shape of post-war education had provoked this outburst, included Professor Tawney and Harold Shearman.

The method by which the Board's officers reached their decisions was important. The Board had no existing means of examining the whole of the educational system, and, as we have seen, they set themselves a limited task. At the initial meeting on 16 November 1940 the group summoned by Holmes divided into a panel of principal assistant secretaries and a panel of chief inspectors, the latter being required to consult an Educational Theory Panel which already existed as part of the Board's consultative arrangements. In the event all three panels submitted reports to Holmes. In practice the principal assistant secretaries often quoted the chief inspectors of their own branches in support of the views which they were advocating, so that the division into panels was of little consequence. What was of consequence was that the principal assistant secretaries and inspectors looked at every proposal in terms of whether it would solve the problems of the institution (elementary school, secondary school or junior technical college) which it was their daily work to ponder. Not only was their approach empirical, but their empiricism was applied to the institutions which they knew and assumed must

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15 P.R.O.Ed136/260,Holmes to Ramsbotham,29.1.41. Chrystal was the secretary at Greenwood's office

16 Ibid.,R.S.Wood to Holmes,30.1.41

continue and not to the educational system as a whole. S.H.Wood had foreseen this difficulty, and it was in order to overcome it that he had proposed the setting up of panels in the first place. He had predicted difficulties if each branch thought about its problems in isolation. Nonetheless, that is what seems to have happened. Holmes himself did not take part in most discussions, attending only when an impasse had been reached or conclusions awaited final approval. The significant figures were the principal assistant secretaries who headed the Board's elementary, secondary and technical branches, W.C.Cleary, G.G.Williams and H.B.Wallis.

William Cleary had entered the Board's service at the age of 24 in 1910. He had started as a junior inspector of elementary education and his experience included four years as a principal private secretary to three Presidents (such was the rapidity of change) before he became head of the elementary branch in 1940. He was an open-minded man, and his situation encouraged such an approach. A division was bound to be made between the primary and secondary parts of his elementary empire. The senior elementary school was essentially a negative institution by origin in the sense that pupils were not chosen for it and did not choose it, but went there because continued education after 11 was compulsory and it was accepted that the curriculum had to be extended beyond the basic skills. In spite of the many promising developments in their curricula which educationists noted, such schools, in contrast to the secondary schools, had no traditions, no network of associations, no vested interests. Yet whilst this meant that they were too weak to claim attention equal to that given to the grammar schools in the discussions at the Board, their very weakness became an argument used by those who wanted segregation to continue. It became a stock argument of the grammar school lobby that it did not want the attractions and strength of academic study to stifle the promising

embryo curricular developments of the senior elementary schools which their existing freedom, based of course on their separateness the mainstream of secondary education, gave them.[17] It was Cleary, aided by the chief inspector for elementary education, R.H.Charles, who argued the case on occasions for the multilateral school and, as a compromise, for common schooling between 11 and 13 in modern schools.

Griffith Williams, head of secondary branch, taught at two public schools, Wellington and Lancing, during the 1914-18 war and entered the Board's service in 1919. In 1935 he took over from Cleary as Lord Halifax's principal private secretary and continued in the post when Oliver Stanley became President. He was the most committed of the three officials. Butler later described him as "the traditionalist" in the group.[18] Certainly he was immersed in public and grammar school traditions, knew clearly what these required of the public education system, had frequent contacts with all of the organizations representing those interests and was very knowledgeable. A former Deputy Secretary of the Board, clearly out of sympathy with many of the goals embraced by some members of the Spens Committee, had attributed what he considered to be the unexpected emergence of at least a measure of coherence in the Spens Report to the "clear-mindedness of Mr. G.G.Williams"[19] who, as an assistant secretary at that time, had done much of the committee's drafting. Williams was thus applauded as the man who ensured that the Board's views were prominent in the key recommendations about the future pattern of post-primary education. Williams was also secretary of the Secondary Schools Examination Council, which at this time was promoting changes in the school certificate examinations. He frequently attended meetings of the Headmasters' Conference. He was to be a major influence on both the Fleming and Norwood Committees, which he and his counterpart in the inspectorate, F.R.G.Duckworth, served as two of the

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17 M.Loukes,'The Pedigree of the Modern School',British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.VII,no.2,May 1959,pp.125-139. Loukes commented that the 1944 Act only performed the "legal ceremonial of declaring the secondary modern school open", for "when it was christened it was already a sturdy toddler with a mind of its own." Loukes' comment exemplifies the attitude that the senior elementary school had virtues which deserved to be preserved

18 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.93

19 P.R.O.Ed136/131,E.G.Howarth to Holmes,13.6.38

three assessors appointed by the Board.

Williams was far better placed than the other two to protect his corner and this is how he seems to have seen his function. Whilst he saw the need to accept the abolition of fees for the tactical reasons which R.S.Wood had outlined, and because fees were incompatible with selection by ability, he did not at any stage waver on two principles: that a grammar school education had to start at 11, and that pupils had to be selected for it at that age and be educated separately from others.

Cleary's and Williams' counterpart in the technical branch, H.B. Wallis, was a much less influential figure. It is significant that Butler, when listing and commenting upon his "quite outstanding group of civil servants",[20] does not even mention Wallis, although he was head of technical branch throughout Butler's presidency of the Board. He had been appointed to that post in 1938. He represented the view, which was widely held at that time, that Britain's future industrial success and therefore prosperity depended on diverting some of the ablest children from the academic tradition of the grammar school into a technical or commercial education. He wanted a share of the talented children who were going to the grammar school, and believed that technical education would tend to flourish if the existing link between junior technical colleges and their parent colleges were maintained.

The six policy-makers - Holmes, R.S.Wood,S.H.Wood, Cleary, Williams and Wallis, - were all of the same generation, being aged between 50 and 58. With the exception of Williams, who had not joined the Board until 1919, they had all begun their careers there between 1909 and 1911. They had thus completed about 30 years' work in the same government department. They were steeped in the philosophy of Hadow, with its re-organization of elementary schools to provide secondary

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20 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.93

education for the mass of the population alongside the grammar school for the selected minority. They were also used to change being affected at a leisurely pace. Their thoughts were constricted by their long experience.

However conservative were these men's inclinations, they all had to accept that change was inevitable. Butler was later to describe his Bill to Holmes as being about making "progress with social evolution".[21] The phrase could have been Holmes' own, for he and his colleagues aimed to adjust the administrative framework of the education service and the pattern of its schools to what they conceived to be the new social outlook. This outlook was hostile to privilege, but not democratic. The principal change which they regarded as inevitable was that entry to secondary schools, now increasingly called grammar schools, should be on the basis of attainment and that parental income should play a reduced part or no part at all. R.S.Wood, for example, considered the case for the abolition of fees to be "unanswerable."[22] Cleary, and to a lesser extent R.S.Wood, were to be the only ones to challenge the established pattern of post-primary schooling.

When S.H.Wood sent the draft report of the Principal Assistant Secretaries' Panel to Holmes in January 1941,[23] he apologized for the inconsistencies which resulted from trying to reconcile irreconcilable views, but in fact strong majority views emerged on three main issues.

Firstly there was no intention to raise the leaving age beyond 15. The report was divided into long and short range policies. As a long range policy 16 was stated to be desirable, but in the section on short-range policy it was stated that, "we attach little immediate importance to our suggestion that the upper age of full-time compulsory education should be 16." Wood, in his letter, made it clear

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21 P.R.O.Ed136/444,Butler to Holmes,16.12.43
22 P.R.O.Ed136/212,R.S.Wood's Note of 17.1.41
23 Ibid.,S.H.Wood to Holmes,9.1.41,enclosing Draft Report to the Secretary of the Panel of the P.A.Ss

that the inclusion of a reference to 16 was "for good tactical reasons". The report in fact argued strongly against the raising of the school leaving age to 16 on the grounds that there was no prospect that "the type of education which can be universally provided justified requiring every type of child to remain at school until that age." The clear assumption was that modern school education was to be of too low a quality to make it possible for public opinion to accept that it should be compulsory beyond 15.

Secondly the report noted the relevance of schooling to subsequent employment and that the senior schools were mainly for "those who will find their careers in the humbler walks of industry and commerce and domestic occupations." They saw no need to alter that, although they did consider it desirable to divert some pupils from grammar to technical education because of the "demands of industry and commerce."

Thirdly, having considered alternatives, they recommended transfer at 11 to modern and grammar schools, with a second transfer for some pupils at 13 from both to technical schools. At 13 also children misplaced at 11 were to be exchanged between modern and grammar schools.

The similarity between this scheme and the system of secondary education throughout much of England and Wales after the war is striking. That it was put together within ten weeks of the initial meeting called by Holmes and that it was to survive all the pressures of public debate and campaigning over the next few years is evidence of its nature as an extension of the policy which the Board had been following since the 1920s.[24]

Although these views were presented to Holmes as the agreed report of the P.A.Ss.' Panel, there were two other views which

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24 Vide B.Simon, The Politics of Educational Reform, 1920-1940, London 1974, passim

continued to be pressed. The report was a defeat for R.S.Wood and Cleary, but neither gave up their points of view. The two men had one thing in common which distinguished them from their colleagues. In addition to their appreciation of the administrative problems, they understood the social changes which were taking place at the time and foresaw the consequences of these for the post-war period. They differed only in the extent of their enthusiasm in embracing the multilateral school as the means by which these aspirations could be satisfied.

We have already noted Wood's understanding of the social upheaval which the war was causing and his recognition that a change in political control might follow the war. He wrote to Holmes that "it is clear that the war is moving us more and more in the direction of Labour's ideas and ideals and the planning for a national 'New Order' will be more towards the left than may generally be imagined now."[25] Wood felt that these interests would be satisfied by transferring all pupils at 11 to modern schools based on the existing senior schools, with transfer at 13 to grammar and technical schools. He met the objection that some pupils would have to transfer twice by observing that under the proposed scheme those going to technical school would already have to do so, and by claiming that vocational ambitions would be clearer at this later date. He considered the multilateral school to be the answer "in many areas where schools are not so thick on the ground."[26]

Cleary held similar views, although for him the multilateral school was the answer, and a common school for all pupils between the ages of 11 and 13 a compromise. His reaction to the panel's report was to recognize it as a defeat for himself. His criticism of his colleagues' approach was fundamental. "Modern large scale war, and

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25 P.R.O.Ed136/212,R.S.Wood's Note of 17.1.41. There was one particular furrow which Wood ploughed alone amongst the Board's officials. He had earlier proposed the revival of the Militia Act, but with the lower age of 18, which he thought would "go a long way to breaking down class misunderstandings... at any rate among the men." As an afterthought he added that something similar would be needed for the women.

26 Ibid.,Note by R.S.Wood,Educational Reconstruction,20.11.40

particularly a 'total' war of democracy against dictatorship, emphasizes the essential unity of the nation, the common interests of all its members and the need for making a reality of the democratic system which we profess to be defending," he wrote. "This tendency of thought and feeling must lead to a greater merging of the different sections of the community and the breaking down of social and economic barriers and privileges. To this social revolution the schools will be expected to conform and to contribute, and indeed they may be its chief help as they could be its greatest obstacle if the types of post-primary education were to remain as sharply distinct as they are at present."[27]

Cleary's argument was that Hadow re-organization and the 1936 Education Act, the bases of his colleagues' thinking, were quite inadequate in the circumstances and that the panel must go beyond ideas of parity between different institutions and accept the notion of multilateral schools. "The obvious and perhaps the only satisfactory answer, "he wrote," is the multilateral post-primary school attended by all children over 11 alike." He recognized the existence of problems, but urged that the idea should not be dismissed, since it offered the possibility of "the only full solution of the problem of a truly democratic education."

Acknowledging his failure to convince his colleagues, Cleary tried in February 1941 a direct approach to Holmes.[28] He expressed succinctly his fear that educational policy might be used to frustrate social policy thus,"... inasmuch as higher education is to be given in three distinct types of schools, grammar, technical and modern, each aiming at different types of careers for its pupils, the schools will continue to accentuate the social distinctions between these careers which it will be the aim of social policy to eliminate." He again advocated multilateral schools, and, as a less satisfactory

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27 Ibid.,Note by Cleary,Post-War Social Development and its Effects on Schools,13.1.41

28 Ibid.,Note by Cleary,Reconstruction Policy in Education.General Memo.Note by Mr. Cleary,1.2.41

alternative where practical considerations made them impossible immediately, Wood's scheme of common schooling for the 11 to 13 year olds.

One of the weaknesses in Williams' case was the difficulty of claiming convincingly that all selection at 11 would be accurate. Williams and his supporters had tried to answer this criticism, by advocating genuine re-assessment and transfer at 13. Cleary attacked this argument, pointing out that it would only be possible if the courses in the three types of school were the same and that, if this were the case, there was no need for three separate schools. Accurately foretelling the future, he added, "I do not believe, human nature and the pull of the grammar school being what they are, that once you get children into a grammar school at 11 you will ever get them transferred to a modern school at 13."

This conflict between Cleary and the rest of the P.A.Ss.' Panel was mirrored in the Inspectors' Panel, where Cleary's elementary colleague, R.H.Charles, found himself similarly isolated. The report of the Inspectors' Panel,[29] was summarized by Williams, followed the lines of the P.A.Ss.' Panel. After it had been discussed between the inspectors and Holmes, Charles sent a memorandum to Holmes just as Cleary had done.[30] He supported the proposal of Cleary and R.S.Wood for common schooling between 11 and 13. His argument was an educational one, stressing that, "the best foundation for specialising in any direction is a sound general education." This could not be completed by 11. He was impressed by the vitality of many senior schools and had confidence that, given better buildings and more staff, they could undertake the role allotted to them under this scheme.

Wallis, speaking for technical branch, had sympathy with the 11-13 common school proposal, but for a very limited reason, and

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29 Ibid.,Note by Williams,Summary Note on Post-War Policy,undated
30 Ibid.,Charles to Holmes,11.2.41

not the fundamental reason which Cleary had advanced. He was anxious to raise the status of technical schools. He criticised his panel's view on the ground that technical schools would remain the grammar schools' poor relations.[31] Once he felt that Cleary, Wood and Charles had lost their case, he changed courses a little, and advocated that children should be selected at 11 for grammar/technical courses on the basis of attainment, and be chosen specifically for the one or the other at 13 on the basis of aptitude, not attainment. The interests of the majority of pupils not chosen at 11 for this course did not concern him.

The battle lines were thus drawn. Cleary and Charles stood for multilateral schools, with common schooling from 11 to 13 as a compromise which would be supported by R.S.Wood and possibly by Wallis. Williams and Duckworth, head of secondary branch and chief inspector for secondary schools, defended the needs as they saw them of the grammar school.

Support for the former then came from the Education Theory Panel which the inspectors had been charged to consult. Unfortunately for the panel, it was Duckworth who conveyed its views to Holmes and he took the opportunity to express his disapproval and to repeat his support for a break and segregation at 11.[32]

Nonetheless Cleary saw the opportunity which the Education Theory Panel's report offered. Leaving aside his advocacy of multilateral schools for the moment, he decided to press the compromise proposal of common schooling between 11 and 13. Rather cheekily he sent to Holmes on 28 February his own re-draft of chapter 1 of the Green Book, incorporating this proposal.[33]

Three days later Williams responded. In a sharply-worded note to Holmes[34] he listed the support for the break at 11, including that of the Spens Committee, and emphasized the practical difficulties of

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31 Ibid.,Note by Wallis,Note on S.H.Wood's Draft(i.e. that referred to in footnote 22),11.1.41

32 Ibid.,Duckworth to Holmes,14.2.41,enclosing The Breaks in the Education System. Duckworth had already expressed his views, in support of Williams and as a riposte to Cleary's approach to Holmes, in conversation with Holmes on 11 and 14 February and in a memorandum to him on 17 February

33 Ibid.,Cleary to Holmes,28.2.41

34 Ibid.,Williams to Holmes,3.3.41

altering course from that followed since Hadow. But when he came to his defence of segregation, he was concerned solely with the future of the grammar schools. In a revealing comment, he complained that, inasmuch as Cleary's proposal aimed to achieve parity of esteem between different types of school, "the parity of esteem is purchased at the expense of the Grammar Schools." Since grammar schools unquestionably had the highest esteem, parity of esteem for all types of schools could hardly be purchased elsewhere. The remark reveals Williams' attitude to this aspiration. He clearly did not want parity between types of school. He gave his opinion that, if they shared Cleary's goals, the "logical" solution was to abandon all notions of separate secondary schools and selection, but that, if they were not prepared to follow him that far, they should settle for the existing system, modified only to the extent that they should find an alternative to the existing special place examination and improve the buildings and staffing of senior elementary schools. Williams' 'New Jerusalem' differed from the old only in these two ways: a new means of selection and better conditions in the schools to be attended by the majority of children.

Three more days elapsed before Holmes resolved the conflict in Williams' favour.[35] The President was shortly to make a speech at the N.U.T. Conference at Morecambe and wished to let his audience know that the Board's officials would soon be discussing post-war education with the Union. The conflict, which Holmes always described as being over whether transfer should be at 11 or 13 although of course much more was at stake than that, was holding up progress. He announced that the break would be at 11. He attributed the decision to the President, Herwald Ramsbotham, although the President does not seem to have taken any part previously and can hardly have been in a position to do anything but accept a recommendation from Holmes. When Ramsbotham

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35 Ibid.,Note by Holmes,6.3.41

addressed the Lancashire branch of the N.U.T. a few days later he announced that reconstruction plans were being considered and outlined the basis of Board thinking, although the continuation of a break at 11 was assumed rather than stipulated. He concentrated rather on the other end of secondary schooling, which had of course been the subject of the question pondered by the officials, stating, "What I want is the school leaving age to be raised to 15 as soon as ever circumstances permit, day continuation classes for all boys and girls up to the age of 18, and - though this is a remoter objective and will take much longer to attain - I should like to see our secondary or post-primary schools so remodelled and so extended that in due course all boys and girls up to the age of 16 can be furnished with an education suitable to their various tastes and capacities."[36]

Holmes left open the possibility that Cleary could raise the matter again, by saying that, if teachers and local education authorities wished to discuss the age of transfer, then they were of course free to do so. For the moment Cleary had lost his battle, although another opportunity was to arise for him to press the point in the future. Two more months were needed to complete the Green Book, but no further discussion took place on the nature and organization of post-primary education.

Holmes' handling of the distribution of the Green Book shows clearly his belief that all should be settled by the professionals before the politicians were admitted to the discussion. Ramsbotham was compliant. On 13 May 1941 Holmes handed Ramsbotham the revised drafts of chapters 1 and 9, the former dealing with the new structure of schools including the vexed question discussed above, the latter dealing with the equally vexed question of the dual system. Later in the day Holmes sent to Ramsbotham a note asking for his permission to print and circulate confidentially the Green Book.[37] Assuring Ramsbotham that the Board was not committed "in the slightest degree",

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36 Reported in Times, 17.3.41, p.2 and Schoolmaster, 20.3.41, p.258
37 P.R.O.Ed136/212, Holmes to Ramsbotham, 13.5.41

he explained that the Board's officers wished to discuss these matters confidentially with the teachers, local education authorities and education officers, i.e. the other professionals. Only when these consultations were complete, i.e. when the professionals had formed a view, would the "time for ministerial determination of post-war policy" arise. Holmes wanted to be certain however that the Green Book did not contain major proposals that were "actually unacceptable" to Ramsbotham, since this would be "embarrassing later on". The same day Holmes had a reply concurring.[38] Thus Holmes had established that no politician should have access to the Green Book, whilst he had a measure of ministerial backing for its major proposals. To emphasize the point the Green Book was endorsed, "Strictly Confidential. For Official Use Only."

The Green Book was a defeat for the Labour Party's aspirations, both long and short term. The school-leaving age was to be raised only to15. Not only was secondary education to be in three types of school, but they were specifically given different leaving ages of 15 in modern schools, 15 or 16 in technical schools, and 16, 17 or 18 in grammar schools.[39] Direct grant grammar schools were to remain and to charge fees.

Transfer to the three types of school was to be at 11. The casuistry over second transfers at 13 of children considered to have been wrongly placed at 11, which Duckworth had elaborated earlier, was now enshrined in the Green Book. Noting that grammar schools had to have a foreign language and different syllabuses in mathematics and science from the age of 11, he had not found this incompatible with general education courses between 11 and 13 to facilitate transfers, since "there is more than one kind of general education."[40] The Green Book's phrasing was more muted, but it meant the same. If a "genuine review" were to take place at 13, the content of education

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38 Ibid.,Ramsbotham to Holmes,13.5.41
39 Green Book,op.cit.,p.10
40 P.R.O.Ed136/212,Duckworth to Holmes,17.2.41

between 11 and 13 in the three types of school, "though differentiated in detail should in general be the same."[41] As Cleary had pointed out earlier, if the reason why children had to be segregated at 11 was that they needed different courses, there was no point in then giving them the same course; conversely, if the courses were to be similar, there was no need to segregate.

The definition of parity between the three types of school also echoed the views expressed earlier by Duckworth and indeed by Holmes himself. Duckworth had suggested that any concessions by the grammar school interests could not be made "without seriously lowering the standard of performance in those schools."[42] Holmes' own view had been that such a development would be "wholly undemocratic."[43] The Green Book now made a similar point, defining parity in terms of equal opportunities to enter unequal institutions.[44]

In short, the Green Book offered little to the Labour Party.

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41 Green Book, op.cit., p.12
42 P.R.O.Ed136/212, Duckworth to Holmes, 17.2.41
43 Duckworth quoted Holmes to Holmes in the same note
44 Green Book, op.cit., p.7

Chapter 3:THE REACTION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT TO THE GREEN BOOK.

The Labour Party could not react immediately to the Green Book, since Holmes' restricted circulation list excluded all politicians. But news filtered through to the party, not just from those leaks which became public knowledge, but more directly from members of the London County Council Education Committee.

In the arrangements which the Board had for consulting the local education authority associations, the L.C.C.Education Committee was accorded a special place and had direct consultations with the Board. Although the confidentiality of the Green Book presented the L.C.C. with some problems, since both the Council and its Education Committee met in public, all members of a sub-committee which met in private had copies, in order that they should be able to respond to the Board's invitation.[1] H.B.Lees-Smith, who had been a Labour President of the Board of Education for a short while in 1931 after Trevelyan's resignation and was still an M.P., commented tartly that he was no less responsible than forty members of the L.C.C., when he successfully demanded a copy.[2] It was clearly impossible to maintain confidentiality when a body as large and as politically-concerned as the L.C.C. was privy to the secrets. Members were bound to discuss the contents of the Green Book with their political colleagues who were not members of the Council, and this was the means by which many in the Labour movement came to know of the Board's ideas. It was indeed absurd that Members of Parliament, who would eventually have to legislate, should be denied access to proposals which some of their political counterparts in London local government at the other end of Westminster Bridge had been invited to discuss. H.C.Dent poured appropriate scorn on the attempt to keep secret the proposals which educationists were keenest to know.

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1 P.R.O.Ed 136/249, Salmon (Clerk to the L.C.C.) to Holmes, 15.10.41

2 P.R.O.Ed 136/215, Ede to Butler, 5.8.41 seeking his permission to give copies of the Green Book to Lees-Smith and F.C.R.Douglas,M.P. who was Ede's Parliamentary Private Secretary. The case of Douglas exemplifies the restricted nature of the circulation. Butler readily agreed to the request.

"What was this famous Green Book...?" he asked, answering, "I cannot say, because I was not a member of any of the bodies to which copies were sent. I have, like many other interested people, a fairly full summary of the document, but it would be improper of me either to reveal how I obtained this or to use it for the illumination of those to whom the Board of Education in its wisdom, decided not to make known its contents."[3] Other sources of information on the Green Book's contents were the W.E.A, the T.U.C.Education Committee and the Co-operative Union, all of which were sent copies by the Board.[4]

It was not in fact until October 1941 that the education committees of the three main parties were officially given copies of the Green Book. It was J.S.Middleton,General-Secretary of the Labour Party, who touched Butler in a tender spot and brought about the change of heart. It is not clear whether Middleton acted knowingly or whether he merely stumbled upon the threat which worked. In conversation with Chuter Ede he asked for a copy of the Green Book and, when he received the familiar explanation for why this was not possible, threatened to write to Churchill.[5]

By this time Butler was already in a dilemma. The previous month he had begun to prepare Churchill for changes in the education system requiring legislation. Churchill's reaction was wholly negative. He replied, "I certainly cannot contemplate a new Education Bill."[6] From that point onwards Butler had to tread warily, continuing his preparations, but allowing no controversy to surface which would attract the attention of Churchill, for whom educational change meant the religious controversies of 1902 and a divisiveness in the nation that his public persona existed to prevent. Butler had therefore begun to enlist the support of other members of

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3 H.C.Dent,Education in Transition,London 1944,pp.204-205
Dent later observed,"Most of the organisations which were sent the Green Book replied volubly, and with no pretence at secrecy. Many sent their replies simultaneously to the Board of Education and the Press", H.C.Dent, 1870-1970 Century of Growth in English Education,London 1970,p.116

4 P.R.O.Ed.136/293 contains a copy of the circulation list

5 P.R.O.Ed.136/215,Unsigned memorandum of the Middleton-Ede conversation and Butler's subsequent action,2.10.41

6 Quoted in R.A.Butler, op cit., p.94

the cabinet. Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council, for example agreed with him that there were "distinct stirrings below the surface in the realm of social affairs" and that the Board should continue to "do work behind the scenes" in order to be ready when the time was right.[7] Butler also asked Holmes to prepare a note on how much of the Green Book's proposals could be carried out without legislation.[8] Middleton's threat to approach Churchill might have upset this clandestine technique of promoting educational reform.

Butler had always been embarrassed by the decision to be secretive. The decision had been taken technically by his predecessor Ramsbotham, although in réality by Holmes, and Butler had never been happy about it. Indeed, soon after taking up office he had considered how he could extricate himself from this difficulty. His initial idea[9] had been to establish in the Summer of 1942 a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament with all parties represented. The Board would have spent the interim formulating its proposals which the joint committee would have been invited to consider. The joint committee would have heard views from all interested parties and, if it produced an agreed report, legislation would have been assured an easy passage through Parliament. Such a procedure would, of course, have released Butler himself from having to reach some difficult decisions and may have held attractions for him for that reason, but it does seem that he also had a genuine desire for wider discussion. One of the arguments which he put to Holmes was that, by confining discussion to those professionally involved in education, they would not be sure "that the whole English character is represented, nor shall we be able to hold the confidence of the

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7 P.R.O.Ed.136/215,Butler to Holmes,1.10.41;the quotations are from Butler's report of Anderson's views.

8 Ibid., Holmes to Butler,30.9.41 was Holmes' reply to Butler's request

9 Ibid., Butler to R.S.Wood,2.9.41

country, since fears will grow that a 'corner' is being effected." There were, however, far too many difficulties in the way of Butler's scheme, not least the objections of Chuter Ede, but Butler's attempt to widen discussion shows his discontent with Holmes' posture of secrecy.

Butler now headed off Middleton's approach to Churchill and attempted to widen discussion at the same time. He saw Attlee, who agreed that the Green Book could not be published but made the point that the T.U.C. and other bodies which were privy to the Green Book's contents were inextricably bound up with the Labour Party, and that it would be more sensible to let the Labour Party Education Committee have a copy, and that similarly the Liberals and Conservatives should be sent copies. The letter to the three political parties again stressed the need for secrecy.[10] Even then the means by which the Labour Party was to receive its copy was indirect. Arthur Greenwood was authorised to send it to Middleton, having submitted the covering letter to the Board.[11]

Butler also said that he would put a copy in the Commons Library. In fact he seems not to have done this, for, when he was asked in April 1943 to make the Green Book available to the Commons, he urged members to await a more developed scheme and specifically refused to place a copy in the Commons Library.[12] The reason for saying in 1941 that a copy would be made available to M.Ps. was that Churchill could then be told, if he were dissatisfied with Butler's action, that this was "more likely to keep the issues out of the forefront of public attention" than any other action he was at liberty to take.[13]

Later in October Butler published a list of headings, which indicated to the public the main topics which were under discussion.[14] He later claimed that, by doing this, he had pushed "forward into the light" the Green Book's proposals.[15] The claim that he was

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10 Ibid., Greenwood to Butler,8.10.41 refers to this
11 B.L.Ede Diary,vol.1,3.10.41
12 H.C.Debates, vol.388,col.791,8.4.43
13 Supra,footnote 5
14 H.C.Debates,vol.374,cols.1937-1939,23.10.41;written answer
15 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.95

publicising the Board's views was not justified. Proposals were not included in his list, which consisted only of a brief reference to each topic; for example, all that was included on the question of the leaving age was this, "The raising of the school leaving age. Should there be exemptions after 14 as contemplated by the Education Act, 1936?" That possible legislation would include a decision on the leaving age and on the highly controversial aspect of a recent act was hardly a revelation. Butler's list was accompanied by a reiteration of the view that the Green Book was a confidential document for the Board's use in discussions with its partners in the education service. "Such consultations cannot properly and profitably be conducted in open forum", he stated. Requests for further information were still rejected. When Lord Justice Scott, for example, asked Butler for a copy of "the now famous but still mystical embodiment of your draft proposals", Holmes suggested that the same refusal as in the past should be sent.[16] And Butler continued to reject requests from M.Ps.[17]

Middleton had created more anxiety at the Board than perhaps he realised. The result, however, was that by October 1941 the contents of the Green Book were known to all sections of the Labour movement concerned with education. The only exception was the National Association of Labour Teachers, but, as will be seen, that had sufficiently close contacts with the other sections to be well-informed and indeed to make the most thorough and trenchantly critical analysis of the Board's plans of any that were made at the time from a radical viewpoint.

The National Executive Committee

Until the Autumn of 1941, i.e. the time when the Labour Party

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16 P.R.O.Ed136/215, L.Scott to Butler, 2.2.42, endorsed by Holmes

17 E.g. Ibid., Butler to Sir Patrick Hannon M.P., 25.6.42

received its copy of the Green Book, the body which was chiefly responsible for formulating the party's policies on education was the Education Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of the N.E.C. In October the Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee took over. This reported to the Reconstruction Central Committee which Harold Laski had persuaded the Labour Party to establish. Laski's scheme when proposed to the Party was sufficiently detailed to include suggestions about who should serve on the new Sub-Committee. Amongst the names were Alice Bacon, William Cove M.P., Barbara Drake, Hugh Franklin, H.B.Lees-Smith M.P., Lady Simon of Wythenshawe, Rev.E.Sorenson M.P., R.H.Tawney and George Tomlinson M.P.[18] All of them were duly appointed to the new Sub-Committee,[19] and since each of them, except Alice Bacon, had served on the old Education Advisory Committee at various times between 1938 and 1941, there was thus continuity between the two bodies.

At its meetings between 1938 and 1941 the Education Advisory Committee had formulated policies on several major aspects of education. In February 1939 the committee considered the Spens Report and came down strongly in favour of multilateral schools as the basis of secondary education. Devoting two pages out of seven to arguing their case on this topic, they strengthened the commitment to a multilateral policy which had been included by Barbara Drake in the paper drafted by her as the basis of the discussion. She had made the limited point that there was "a strong case to be made for a general development of multilateral schools as the goal of a long term policy,"[20] but the committee removed this general aspiration, and in its place stated that, "The time has now come when local education authorities should be required to plan a systematic development of multilateral schools as an immediate practical policy."[21]

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18 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Reconstruction Central Committee Minutes,July 1941

19 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee Minutes,hereafter referred to as R.E.S.-C.Minutes,25.9.41. All except Tawney attended this meeting; his membership dated from the meeting on 1.1.43

20 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Local Government Department Papers, L.G.106,Memorandum on the Report of the Consultative Committee, January 1939.The emphasis was hers.

21 Ibid.,L.G.109,February 1939 is the amended paper. T.H., Labour Party Records,Education Advisory Committee Minutes, hereafter referred to as E.A.C.Minutes,13.2.39

Copies were despatched to Labour M.Ps. and the T.U.C.Education Committee.

At its next two meetings the committee adopted two papers by Hugh Franklin.[22] These took the discussions much further, for Franklin not only argued the case against segregation and for multilateral schools on both educational and social grounds, but gave in his second paper a detailed description of how a multi-lateral school should be organised. The committee was no longer looking dimly into the future. Now they had been given a model.

Franklin's description of how a multilateral school should be organised bears a striking resemblance to what some educationalists in the mid-1970s were to regard as the ideal comprehensive school. He favoured a five-form entry school admitting 150 pupils a year. The classes would be unstreamed; pupils "should all feel as equal on entry to the multilateral school as they did on entry to the junior school four years earlier." A common balanced curriculum would be followed for the first three years with setting by subjects. At the end of the third year, two-year specialised but non-vocational courses would begin, to be followed by two-year sixth form courses. Franklin's proposals required the end of fees, raising the school leaving age to 16 and the end of university-controlled 16+ examinations.

His views differed from those of his successors in the 1970s only in three respects. He wanted sets to be all-age, i.e. a first form pupil could be alongside a third form pupil in mathematics if he were exceptionally advanced. The courses in the fourth and fifth years were to be quite heavily biased towards science, literary subjects, etc. He wanted all examinations at 16+ to be replaced by

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22 T.H.,L.G.112,Draft Synopsis for Post-Primary Education,March 1939, adopted by E.A.C.,13.3.39
T.H.,L.G.114,New Schools for Old,April 1939,adopted by E.A.C., 24.4.39 and referred to N.E.C.

a detailed school record of set placings in the lower school, staff assessments and a general account of a pupil's school life. Franklin gave the committee a sight of the future. It was a remarkable paper.

He also argued that the plan was within the bounds of practical politics. All new buildings, of which there would in any case have to be many, would be designed for the new type of school. Existing buildings could be used by selecting the largest, whether they be elementary or secondary, for the multilateral school and re-allocating the smaller ones for primary schools. He estimated that the annual cost for implementing the scheme within five years would require a rate of 3d in the £ for London and slightly less for the home counties. He omitted the capital cost of new buildings which would have to be met whatever scheme were adopted, and based his calculation on the reduction of former elementary school classes to a maximum of thirty and on the achievment of equal salaries.

The Education Advisory Committee then considered the politics of achieving its goal. It had been asked to do so by the London Labour Party which had declared itself in favour of a system of multilateral schools at its annual conference in November 1938. In its reply[23] the committee assumed that, if there were a Labour Government, there would be no difficulty because a system of multilateral schools would be introduced "under the impetus of an Act of Parliament or Board Circular." Again the committee was ahead of its time, for it assumed something that was not to happen until 1965,[24] despite the election of a Labour Government in 1945. It gave the L.C.C. advice on how to proceed if a Conservative Government were in power and were hostile to the plan. The

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23 T.H.,L.G.129,London Labour Party Resolution on Multilateral Schools,June1939

24 D.E.S.,Circular 10/65,issued by C.A.R.Crosland

suggestions offered were in part the basis of Labour's schools re-organisations in London in the post-war period, except that they were carried out under a Labour and not a Conservative government.

When the war started the Education Advisory Committee in common with all other educational bodies concentrated on the initial problems of war-time schooling. When it emerged from this pre-occupation, disagreement arose within the committee over the strength of its commitment to multilateral schooling. At its meeting in January 1941 a "certain difference of opinion as to the desirability of advocating a general policy of multilateral schools" was evident.[25] The problems of providing schooling for evacuated children still held the attention of most members of the committee, however, and the problem was shelved. At the next meeting consideration of a paper, criticising the Spens Report and advocating multilateral schools as the answer to the problems which that report had recognised but failed to solve, was deferred.[26]

This was the rather confused situation when the Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee took over. A thorough study of the policy on multilateral schools had been made. It had been agreed as desirable and practicable, but a note of doubt and dissent had entered the discussions following the reference of the policy to the N.E.C.

The last contribution of the E.A.C. to the formulation of policy before it handed over to the Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee was to agree the phrase which was to become the basis for compromise. At its last meeting it approved a paper which urged that the Board should "encourage, as a general policy, the development of a new type of multilateral school which would provide a variety of courses suited to children of all normal types."[27] This formula was incorporated in an interim statement agreed by the new committee at

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25 T.H.,E.A.C.Minutes,29.1.41

26 T.H.,L.G.187,The Spens Report and Multilateral Schools,April 1941
E.A.C.Minutes,14.5.41

27 T.H.,L.G.219,Education after the War,September1941
E.A.C.Minutes,8.9.41
The phrase was echoed in B.Drake,Education for Democracy,London 1941,p.40

its second meeting,[28] and shortly afterwards the Labour Party officially received its copy of the Green Book, which made it clear that the Board's officials were thinking along quite different lines.

It was Alice Bacon who acted as custodian of the agreed wording, and indeed took the committee's thinking further along multilateral lines. In a paper which was the subject of "a prolonged discussion" she took the party's commitment to a general policy of encouraging multilateral schools as her starting point.[29] She cleared out of the way all side issues, noting the areas in which there was almost universal agreement, and concentrated her attack on two points. It was her view that, whatever lip-service was paid to parity between the three types of school, such parity could not be achieved. She also dwelt on the difficulties of selection at 11, and on the inadequacy of the standard response that wrong decisions could be corrected at 13. She thus concentrated on the two weakest points in the arguments of the Board's Green Book and of all who wished to continue on the Hadow path of segregated post-primary schooling.

Her paper ultimately tended to confuse rather than clarify the issues, however, for she introduced a variant to the usual concept of the multilateral school for areas where technical colleges had already been established and could not be incorprated. She proposed that existing secondary schools should provide all courses - academic, practical and commercial - except technical. Pupils wishing to have a technical education would be able to transfer to the technical college a year before the normal school leaving age, i.e. at the age of 14 or 15 depending on whether the leaving age were raised to 15 or 16, and then follow a two year course; many such students would be encouraged to remain longer and would proceed to university.

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28 T.H.,Labour Party Records.Papers presented to the R.E.S.-C.are in the R.D.R.series.R.D.R.9,Education after the War,October 1941
R.E.S.-C.Minutes,9.10.41

29 T.H.,R.D.R.88,Secondary Education,April 1942
R.E.S.-C.Minutes,5.5.42

This proposal satisfied in some measure the objectives of Wallis at the Board. It did at least separate the start of technical education from the academic selection at 11+ which had meant in practice that abler children had already been captured by the grammar school before places in the technical college became available. But it also undermined the fundamental basis of the multilateral concept, viz. that pupils should be educated together in the same school without selection to other schools and colleges. The question was further confused by Miss Bacon's use of an example from the West Riding - Bingley Modern and Technical School - which lacked the academic or grammar school element and which was therefore not illustrative of the solution which she favoured.

It was Shena Simon who now doubted the wisdom of a commitment to multilateral schools.[30] Her thinking was entirely tri-partite. For her the only question was whether the three branches of post-primary education should be in one or three schools. She noted that no multilateral schools existed anywhere in Britain, so that there was no experience of them. She saw major difficulties in every method of arranging such a school which she could envisage. If the school were a combination based on the total size of existing schools joined together, it would have more than 1,500 pupils, of whom only 90 would be in the sixth form and she doubted whether that number could cope as prefects over such a large number of younger pupils. If the school had only 500 pupils, the academic side would be too weak and no choice of subjects at school certificate level would be possible. She also took the view, quite common at the time, that modern and technical schools were doing splendid pioneering work and that this would be stifled in a multilateral school led by a former grammar school head, who would be bound by reason of his

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30 T.H.,R.D.R.107,Multilateral Schools,July 1942
R.E.S.-C.Minutes,9.7.42

academic qualifications to be appointed to direct the new school; it was important for modern and teehnical schools to be "free to develop on their own." She doubted whether the ease with which pupils would move from one side of the multilateral school to another would be much greater than in a segregated system. For Lady Simon the problem of achieving parity between secondary schools doing different levels of work would be solved by the abolition of fees. If this did not in fact solve the problem, she would be prepared "to try the multilateral school," but would regret having to sacrifice educational to social considerations. Apart from an awareness of social considerations, her thinking and the deployment of her arguments were similar to those of the Board's officers who were defending Hadow.

In August 1942 the committee was again brought to the point of decision, by the need to provide the Reconstruction Central Committee with the educational section of a report to be sent to the N.E.C. The agreed draft repeated the previous formula and favoured "as a general policy the development of a new type of secondary school to which all children would go."[31]

Doubts continued to be expressed, however, for in January 1943 the committee received a paper arguing strongly for a system of multilateral schools. The authorship is not clear,[32] but it bears the stamp of Franklin, making exactly the points which he had made earlier. The fact that it was felt necessary to re-state these views is evidence that they were still meeting resistance.

The debate within the committee was ended early in 1943. There was a need to finalise views which could be approved by the N.E.C. and then be presented directly to Butler. Meeting on New Year's Day 1943 the committee established a group to list the objectives of educational advance which were acceptable to the Labour Party.[33] It consisted of Harold Clay, Harold Shearman, the

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31 T.H.,R.E.S.-C.Minutes,28.8.42 refer to discussion based on R.D.R.124,a paper prepared by Harold Shearman which was approved after being amended.This paper is missing from Labour Party Records.R.D.R.130,Draft for Suggested Labour Party Pamphlet, September 1942,is R.D.R.124 as amended.

32 The paper R.D.R.167 bears no attribution,and R.E.S.-C.Minutes, 1.1.43 do not identify the contributor.The arguments bear close resemblance to those of L.G.114

33 T.H.,R.E.S.-C.Minutes,1.1.43

committee's secretary Barbara Drake and the secretary of the party's Research Department Morgan Phillips. A fortnight later the whole committee met and agreed the list.[34] There was no dissent on the need for raising the school leaving age to 15 as soon as the war ended and to 16 within three years of that, with the appointed day specified in the Act. A common code for all post-primary education, the abolition of fees and the assimilation of public schools into the state system were all agreed. However one significant alteration was made in the drafting group's paper. Instead of charging the Board to "encourage, as a general policy, the development of a new type of multilateral school" as had hitherto been the agreed wording, which the drafting group wished to retain, the committee now changed "encourage" to "require".[35] The committee's view of its demands is also important, for it was emphasized that these should be Labour's minimum expectations and that anything less should be opposed in Parliament.

Before the end of January the N.E.C. had approved the statement which thus became party policy.[36] The way was now clear for a deputation to see Butler on 25 February 1943.

The National Association of Labour Teachers

Whilst the National Executive was clarifying its views on the Green Book, the party's affiliated body for teachers, the National Association of Labour Teachers ,was being revived and was entering one of the most active periods of its history. It was N.A.L.T. which had played the leading part in formulating the concept of the multilateral school as an alternative to segregated and selective secondary education. In its pamphlet, Education.A Policy,[37] first published in 1929, it outlined an educational system based on egalitarian principles. The re-publication of this pamphlet in 1935 was occasioned partly by the great interest aroused by the multilateral concept and N.A.L.T. strongly advocated the establishment of such schools. It was also

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34 Ibid.,14.1.43

35 R.D.R.171 is the drafting committee's paper.R.D.R.182 incorporates amendments agreed on 14.1.43

36 T.H.Labour Party Records,National Executive Committee Minutes, contain a letter from M.Phillips to members of the R.E.S.-C, conveying the decision of the N.E.C.

37 N.A.L.T.,Education.A Policy, London 1929.References in this work are to the 1935 edition

N.A.L.T.'s response to the announcement of Spens' terms of reference, which the Association feared would harden the distinctions between the existing secondary schools and senior elementary schools. N.A.L.T.'s case for the multilateral school was closely argued,and included detailed proposals on the internal organisation of such schools. Groupings of pupils, house systems, size, course biases were all the subjects of recommendations.

When the Spens Report was published N.A.L.T. renewed its attack on segregated secondary schooling in a pamphlet, Social Justice in Public Education. Criticising the Hadow policy of developing new types of post-primary schools alongside old secondary schools, N.A.L.T. noted that even the Hadow recommendation of equal status for the different types had been ignored over the years. But the very notion that there were distinguishable kinds of ability at 11+ was denounced. Differences in degrees of ability were acknowledged, as was the emergence of subject aptitudes by some pupils at a later age. N.A.L.T.'s position was succinctly expressed thus, "For a system based upon competition at the age of 11 for unequal opportunities, in schools of unequal social standing, and giving courses of unequal duration under unequal conditions, we would ... substitute a system designed to provide the fullest equality of opportunity for every child to develop according to his natural gifts."[38]

N.A.L.T.'s view of Spens was pessimistic. Its view of the Board's response to Spens was even more so. It rejected Spens' criticisms of multilateral schools, observing that Eton had 1,100 pupils whereas Spens considered a projected multilateral school of 800 to be too large. It noted the contradiction of Spens' having recommended multilateral schools in the very areas where they were

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38 N.A.L.T.,Social Justice in Public Education,London undated,p.9

bound to be too small. As for the Board's reaction to Spens - the statement that nothing could be done about the recommendations in Chapter IX of the Report - N.A.L.T. observed that this was the very chapter in which the Report made "progressive proposals" about parity of conditions, the abolition of fees and the raising of the school leaving age.[39]

These views were formulated at a time when the Association was being almost destroyed by arguments over the popular front and the admittance of communists.[40] The problem continued into the 1940s and N.A.L.T. received (and rejected) further requests from communist teachers for joint action.[41] At its 1942 Annual Conference it was in the position of having to resolve to continue in being and to note that it was still in affiliation with the Labour Party.[42] For the Association's secretary, Evelyn Denington, the obstacle to co-operation was not that the communists were too left-wing. It was that, having turned a somersault over the justness of the war, they would brook no criticism of the National Government. Their position was in her view analogous to Churchill's, whereas she believed that the fight for radical changes in education had to be waged. The problem was, however, much less acute in the early 1940s and the executive was able to devote more energy to reviving the Association and formulating a response to the Green Book. Two officers were particularly influential in these moves, William Cove, the Chairman, and Evelyn Denington.

An ex-miner who had been educated at University College, Exeter, Cove had been an M.P. since 1923, representing Wellingborough until 1929, when he became the member for Aberavon in place of Ramsay MacDonald. Born in 1888, he had by the 1940s already had considerable experience in the field of educational politics, especially in the National Union of Teachers, of which he had been President at the early age of 34. His association with the N.U.T. was from the Labour Party's

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39 Ibid.,p.14

40 A.Tropp,The School Teachers,London 1957,p.216,describes the formation of N.A.L.T. as being the result of a split in the Teachers' Labour League in 1927 over communist domination,and states that N.A.L.T.itself had to fight off communist control

41 E.g.G.L.C.,A/NLT/I/2 Executive Committee Minutes,12.10.42

42 Ibid.,A.G.M.Minutes,8.4.42

point of view both a strength and a weakness; a strength because it gave him contacts and status, a weakness because he was to spend many hours when the Bill was in its Committee stage promoting amendment after amendment concerned with the rights of the teaching profession (and also defending his constituents' non-conformist interests on the church school question) rather than promoting Labour's aims. He became Chairman of N.A.L.T. in 1942. His commitment to multilateralism was made clear in the commons debate on the Spens Report.[43]

Cove was a dynamic force in the association. A radical Welshman with ability as an orator, he was listened to attentively and was in demand as a speaker. His perception and ability to see quickly the fundamental point of any issue were much in evidence in the association's monthly Bulletin. Leah Manning, a fellow N.U.T. - sponsored M.P. until 1931, described him in a biting attack as "a silly little man" who would have had no political career but for N.U.T. sponsorship and who "in spite of his gilt-edged chances ... made nothing of them."[44] Evelyn Denington, who clearly admired him, has explained his lack of advancement in terms of his unreliability. She had to spend hours with him in the Commons bar, in order to get the Bulletin drafted or meetings prepared. He once told her of the occasion when a minister, whom he was serving as Parliamentary Private Secretary for a short time, was giving a poor performance and was in difficulty in the Commons; Cove walked out in disgust. "An enormous talent, a brilliant talent, largely wasted" is how she has recalled him.[45] Nonetheless Attlee recommended Butler to consult Cove as a Labour M.P. interested in education.[46]

Evelyn Denington herself had been brought into teacher politics by W.H.Spikes, a leading member of N.A.L.T. and a member of the N.U.T.

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43 H.C.Debates,vol.343,col.1769,15.2.39
44 L.Manning,A Life for Education,London 1970,p.203
45 This paragraph and the next are based mainly on an interview with Evelyn Denington, conducted by the present writer,10.3.77
46 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Memorandum by Butler of meeting with Attlee, 16.1.42

Executive. She had been brought up in a non-political household, since her father worked in local government and was not expected to be politically active. Her husband was a member of the Independent Labour Party and they became active at the time of the popular front, taking part in the care of Basque children brought to Britain during the Spanish Civil War. It was she who successfully proposed the motion in favour of multilateral schools at the London Labour Party Conference in 1938.[47] A few years before, a similar motion had been debated, opposed by Herbert Morrison for the Executive and defeated. Its dispirited supporters, who met in the tea-room afterwards, resolved to organise a campaign to reverse the decision at a future conference. A campaign of letter-writing and meetings followed. An attempt was made to contact every constituency party and trade union branch in the London area. Two retired teachers did afternoon meetings and Evelyn Denington, Spikes and others spoke at evening meetings. At one time Evelyn Denington was taking three or four meetings a week. The result was that, when she spoke at the Conference, most of the delegates were familiar with the case which she was putting. As she finished speaking she heard Herbert Morrison on the platform behind her say, "She's got them." Only two or three hands were raised in opposition. She was the only primary school teacher amongst the small group of central London teachers who ran N.A.L.T. during the war, and she developed the primary school arguments for the end of selection.

Evelyn Denington and Cove were the dominant influences in the Association. Their mouthpiece was the Bulletin to which Spikes also contributed and which was issued in duplicated form monthly between May 1942 and June 1944. It was a work of remarkably high quality, especially bearing in mind the pressures of war-time, the

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47 G.L.C.,A/NLT/V11/1,Final Agenda for the Annual Conference of the London Labour Party,26.11.38
T.H.,Labour Party Records,L.G.129,London Labour Party Resolution re. Multilateral Schools,June 1939

Board's secrecy about its activities and the demands of Evelyn Denington's own work as a practising teacher. It is not difficult to see why "a remarkable number" of appreciative letters about it were received.[48] Each month members of the Association were provided with information and commentaries, usually perceptive and sometimes trenchant, on developments at the Board, in Parliament, and in Labour Party and N.U.T. affairs.

They were almost alone in seeing through the lip-service which was being paid to concepts such as "parity of esteem" and through the hollowness of commitments to the raising of the school leaving age. Deeply suspicious of the Board, they were able to assess - accurately as it was subsequently to become clear - the limited nature of the objectives which the Board had set itself. The view was widely held in the Labour Party and by other members of the N.A.L.T. Executive, that there were powerful reforming pressures at work and that, to criticise the Board, which was imagined to be with the reformers if not exactly in their van, might awaken the slumbering forces of reaction. Unwilling to accept this optimistic view, they found themselves subjected to criticism and attempts to control the contents of the Bulletin by the establishment of an editorial board.[49] It was felt that they used the Bulletin for the expression of their personal views, and in September 1943 it was agreed that statements in the name of the executive as a whole would be issued in the Bulletin on major questions.[50] With the advantage of an historial perspective it is possible to find a more solid basis for their interpretation of the educational politics of the time than for that of their critics.

Their sceptism, amongst the general euphoria which persisted in educational circles at the time, in spite of anxieties about the church school question, can be seen in their attitude to Butler. Commenting

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48 G.L.C.,A/NLT/I/2,A.G.M.Minutes,27.4.43
49 Ibid.,Executive Committee Minutes,20.4.43
50 Ibid.,Executive Committee Minutes,11.9.43

in the Bulletin on one of his Commons speeches, they wrote, "A well-attended house, an expectant gallery, hoped for some outlines of our new educational world. They expected progress, but were given committees ... He is not at the Board to make great democratic changes in education; he is there either to do nothing, or to see that we do not get too revolutionary. He is not an educationalist; he is a diplomat."[51] The flavour of platform oratory in their writing can be seen in their exhortation to Butler, "We say to him, as has been said to Cripps, Produce your plans! By all means have consultations with various bodies and interests, but get on with the job ... let us have an Education Bill." There were doubts too about Chuter Ede's role at the Board. Whilst he was congratulated on his work there, the question was raised whether "he is not being used to dull the edge of criticism and to divert attention to mere paper schemes."

N.A.L.T. had close contacts with the Education Reconstruction Sub-Committee and with other branches of the Labour Party. Two executive members, Alice Bacon and W.H.Spikes, in addition to Cove, were members of the Sub-Committee. Both Spikes and Cove had previously been members of the Education Advisory Committee. Evelyn Denington was N.A.L.T.'s representative on the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations and was a delegate to the Annual Conferences of Labour Women.

The Association began to formulate its response to the Green Book (the contents of which it did not officially know) at a summer school held in Cambridge in 1941. Tentative decisions were "measured against the educational system of the U.S.S.R."[52] Further discussions took place in the executive during the rest of 1941 and the early part of 1942, and a short memorandum of objectives was approved by the annual conference in April.[53] Its views on raising the school leaving age,

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51 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1V/15,Bulletin,June 1942
52 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1/2,A.G.M.Minutes,8.4.42
53 G.L.C.,A/NLT/V1/12/3 is the final version.A first edition had been received at the Board in November 1941 and is now in the Department of Education and Science Library.This version was amended by the Executive Committee on 23.4.42 at the request of the A.G.M.held earlier in the month, but no alterations were made to the section on multilateral schools.

a common code for all post-primary schools etc. were identical to those of the Education Reconstruction Sub-Committee.

On multilateral schools, however, its commitment was much stronger. "We are opposed to the maintenance or institution of different types of secondary schools," it stated. Its arguments were based on the absence of any known means of satisfactorily assessing types of ability at the age of 11 plus (a gap which the psychologists and designers of selection tests were shortly to claim they could fill) and on the need for the educational system to foster "a spirit in conformity with a democratic system." The Association considered that, "all children to the age of 13 plus should receive a general education in the same school. Only after that age should there be differentiation, but with different courses in the same school." The model multilateral school was very similar to that being advocated in the Education Reconstruction Committee by High Franklin.

In the Bulletin Cove and Denington judged the introduction of a multilateral system to be the central aim of secondary education policy. "The multilateral school is not a side issue," they wrote, "nor can it be a mere offshoot from the main educational system. It is not something that can be experimented with here and there. It is a revolutionary conception, designed to supplant, with all the ruthlessness of a total war, most of the conceptions of public education which have characterised the past ... Entry to the multilateral school must be as automatic and as free from examination as is now the passage from infant to junior school. The multilateral school must be the nation's one and only type of post-primary school."[54]

They followed this with further argument and explanation in each of the next six editions, quoting G.D.H.Cole in support,[55] and giving

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54 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1V/15,Bulletin,May 1942

55 Ibid.,Bulletin,August 1942.Cole's memorandum on behalf of the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey to the Ministry of Works and Buildings was quoted to help N.A.L.T.members faced with the dilemma of local education authorities planning to open junior technical schools which hitherto had been seen as a desirable development

a detailed curriculum which included even the number of periods a week to be given to each subject.

N.A.L.T. was not called upon to respond officially to the Green Book, but in the Bulletin of April-May 1943 Cove and Denington returned to the question of the multilateral school and posed the question,"Can we have multilateral schools without a social revolution?" The problem was that, although the Labour Party, T.U.C., Co-operative Congress, W.E.A. and the Times Educational Supplement had all expressed support for the idea, the teachers as represented by the N.U.T., and the local education authorities, as represented by the Association of Education Committees, had not yet declared themselves for it. The question was whether progress could be made without their support. Whilst recognising that, "Fundamental change can be obtained only through social change," Cove and Denington clutched at those straws which were to hand in the attempt to arrive at an optimistic view of the post-war possibilities. Amongst these was the Green Book's willingness to see a number of experimental multilateral schools established.

Their view remained, however, eventually pessimistic. Acknowledging that some readers of the Bulletin had been irritated by their refusal to be swept along with the general enthusiasm, they remained unrepentantly of that view. "Reaction does not want equality of educational opportunity, and - we venture to assert - will not have it either. Whatever the new Bill contains ... it will not give equal opportunities for children of all classes."[56]

N.A.L.T. saw in the Green Book the denial of Labour's aspirations. It believed that the Labour movement was being deceived by the coalition government. It wanted the party to recognise that Butler was carrying out Conservative policies, and that Labour should

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56 Ibid.,Bulletin,July 1943

respond by dropping the bi-partisan approach and lead a campaign which would rally all of those radical forces in education which seemed to be missing their golden opportunity.

The Trades Union Congress.

The T.U.C.'s Education Committee had also reacted strongly when the Spens Report had rejected multilateral schools, and its commentary on the report had devoted much space to re-stating its case in favour of them under the heading, "Single code welcomed, but not Three Types of School." In doubting whether a single code for post-primary schools and equality in staffing, accommodation and leaving age would bring parity of esteem if three separate types of institution continued, the committee attacked in particular what it recognised as the sop of reviews at 13 of wrong decisions taken at 11. "It is well known," it commented, "that where experiments in transfers between post-primary schools have been tried they have not been successful."[57] When it was required to react to the Green Book, however, it acquiesced in the Spens formula. The committee considered the Book in great detail at ten meetings held between October 1941 and April 1942, one of which was attended by the representatives of the W.E.A. In May 1942 the General Council approved the draft which was then sent to Butler.[58]

The T.U.C. accepted tripartism, demanding that any intelligence tests applied as part of the selection procedures should involve external examiners and that the wishes of parents should be considered. It is true that the T.U.C. retained its own commitment to multilateral schools and wished the Board to "undertake really substantial experiments," noting that, "so long as the three types of school are separately housed, the old prejudices will die hard and equality in fact will not be achieved." Harold Clay, whose contribution to the September 1942 Congress was noted by the Board's observer as having

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57 T.U.C.,Education Committee Minutes, hereafter referred to as Ed.C.,17.3.39

58 T.U.C.,Ed.C.,14.4.42.Memorandum on Education after the War is attached to the minutes.
P.R.O.Ed136/250,Citrine to Butler,23.4.42 also contains a copy

been particularly well received," demanded a "secondary school that is common to all."[59] The T.U.C.'s detailed comments on the Green Book, however, show that it was in fact reluctantly willing to acquiesce in the tripartite system advocated by the Board. Nonetheless it did lay stress on those lesser demands without which there was not the slightest hope of achieving parity between types of schools. These demands were couched in terms which indicated that they were the minimum acceptable, e.g., "Without ... a common leaving age equal status cannot be achieved."

When confronted with the Green Book proposals which were a considerable step backwards from Spens, the T.U.C. lowered its sights and rallied to the Spens proposals which it had previously regarded as inadequate. It seems to have believed that the Spens recommendations constituted a line which could be held.

The T.U.C. was inhibited in its discussions by its fears of divisions within its own ranks which could emanate from religious controversy. Even the 1942 Congress debate was dominated by a Roman Catholic attempt to refer back the memorandum on the grounds that the Green Book's recommendations on the dual system were unacceptable. The move was easily defeated, but even speakers on the main motion, including Clay, showed their awareness of the potential hazards, both to the party and to the cause of educational reform, which were inherent in sectarian differences.

The London County Council

The most significant fact about the L.C.C.'s response to the Green Book was that it was largely that of Savage, the Council's Education Officer and a former Board of Education man who had moved only in 1940 from Kingsway to County Hall. The L.C.C.'s Education Committee met in public and could not therefore be allowed to see or discuss the Green Book. Discussion was therefore confined to the General Sub-Committee. Holmes penned a congratulatory note to

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59 P.R.O.Ed136/250,Buckle to Goodfellow,10.9.42,enclosing a report on the T.U.C.debate,9.9.42

Savage on the L.C.C.'s observations, "since they are no doubt your handiwork."[60]

Holmes' assessment was correct. A special meeting of the Sub-Committee was held on 16 September 1941. Members had received copies of the Green Book and a report by Savage a week earlier. They met again on 29 September and approved their recommendations to the Board.[61] Savage's paper was in line with thinking at the Board. In particular it looked forward to a post-war leaving age of 15, followed by attendance at day continuation schools. It did not even mention raising the leaving age to 16. Abolition of fees in direct grant schools was recommended, but not as a matter of great import, since the lost income was to be replaced by additional grants from the Board or local authorities. He rejected the idea canvassed earlier by Cleary of a transfer to a common school at 11 for all children, with selection at 13, and stood firmly by the Green Book's recommendation of selection at 11 for grammar school, with a review at 13, although he feared the levelling-down which this might necessitate. The Sub-Committee was recommended to recall the decision of the Elementary and Higher Education Committee in 1934-1935 to reject multilateral schooling on the grounds of cost and the disruption which would follow from a further re-organisation of the elementary schools. Savage suggested that such schools would have to have 2,000 pupils and sites which were large enough could not be found in London. "The proposals would certainly encounter opposition, not least in the Board itself," he warned. The most that he could recommend was that the three types of schools might be grouped, in order to allow "as large a measure as possible of common social life within each group." Two members attempted to delete the comments on multilateral schools, but their motion was lost on a show of hands.

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60 P.R.O.Ed136/249,Holmes to Savage,20.10.41

61 G.L.C.,L.C.C.Records,Education General Sub-Committee Minutes, vol.2,Special Meetings on 16.9.41 and 29.9.41;Presented Papers, vol.3,Savage's paper,22.8.41,presented 9.9.41

Savage's views prevailed almost unaltered, and the L.C.C.'s deliberations were completed in two meetings. Whilst therefore the L.C.C.'s observations were detailed and their criticisms of the Green Book sometimes perceptive, they were mild, did not see the light of day and were not the subject of any public campaigning. It was as if the Board's officials had merely extended their deliberations to include a former colleague.

In terms of the office discussions on the organisation of secondary education the observations were unhelpful to Labour's cause, since they exposed the weaknesses in Cleary's compromise of common schools or common courses for the 11 to 13 age group, without making the case for multilateral schools any more strongly than to urge that, "the possibility should not at this stage be ruled out."[62] Savage's particular influence was to advocate day continuation schools. He accorded them higher priority even than the redesignation of senior elementary schools as secondary schools, let alone the raising of the leaving age. He, and to some extent therefore the L.C.C., were thus held to favour an order of priorities which the Board's officials were keen to promote.

The L.C.C.'s memorandum did evince a further clarification of the Board's concept of parity. Cleary challenged the L.C.C.'s estimates for the cost of secondary re-organisation because they assumed that modern school places would cost as much in future as grammar school places. He wrote, 'Modern school buildings would not, unless we modify the curriculum materially, differ from good senior school buildings as now planned and the cost per place therefore will not be as high as for grammar schools, though it will be higher than it is now because of the reduction in the size of classes from forty to thirty." Parity and a common code were not, apparently, intended

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62 P.R.O.Ed136/249,L.C.C.,Observations of the Education (General) Sub-Committee on the Memorandum from the Board of Education

to change things very much.

Unlike other bodies which were pressing their particular views on the Board, the L.C.C. did not cause the Board's officers any anxiety at this stage. Its views were considered so unexceptional that no meeting was considered necessary.

The L.C.C.'s initial acquiescence in Savage's view was, however, shortlived, and its attitude was to change radically during the next year. There was a division on party lines. In "an animated debate" in July 1942 a motion in favour of "the establishment of multilateral schools, wherever practicable, on an experimental basis". was unanimously sponsored by the Labour Party, and energetically opposed by the Conservative members.[63] By the time the Bill was before Parliament the L.C.C. was actively considering how to replace segregated secondary schooling in London by multilateral schools.[64]

The Co-operative Union

The Co-operative Union, after a correspondence between its Education Director, Dr.John Thomas, and Butler's secretary which included the explanation that the Board had exhausted its stocks of the Green Book, was eventually given a fortnight's loan of a copy late in November 1941. It submitted its views the following March[65] and sent a deputation to see Butler and Holmes in June.[66]

Two main topics are of interest: the raising of the leaving age and the multilateral school. The Co-operative Union differed from most other Labour groups in that it wanted local authorities to have the right to raise the leaving age to 16 as facilities allowed, setting the three year period after the end of the war as the deadline. It supported this optimistic view of what was possible by urging that the school building programme should have priority after the war.

In its written report the Union declared itself to be

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63 Schoolmaster,30.7.42,p.63
64 Infra p.287
65 P.R.O.Ed136/256,Thomas to Butler,3.3.42
66 Ibid.,Minute 13,12.5.42

"definitely in favour of the multilateral school." In the discussion at the Board the multilateral school was the only aspect of secondary education which was covered. By the Board's account the deputation's advocacy of it was less fervent than in the written memorandum. There it was stated that the Union's aim was "an ultimate one. They wished, however, to see the experiment made; if it was a failure, another solution would have to be found." In a booklet published after the deputation Thomas discussed at some length the case for the multilateral school, urging that there was "room for the 'new' experiment to prove itself in competition with the 'old'." He expected that "in due course the 'new' may itself become 'old' and accepted as established."[67] He referred to the deputation. His view was that they had urged the Board to give multilateral schools this chance to prove themselves.

Holmes made an observation to this deputation which was to have much significance. He answered the demand for multilateral schools by claiming that, with a common code, local authorities would be free to experiment and some "would certainly wish and would be free to experiment on these lines." It seemed that the right to plan outside the confines of a tri-partite system was being conceded, at least theoretically. The concession would not, however, amount to much if the administrative obstacles to its implementation remained. This was the first time that Holmes used the semantic device which was in the future to be widely used by opponents of multilateral schools and eventually by opponents of comprehensive education, viz. to suggest that these could exist within a segregated system. Whatever use was to be made of it in the future, its effect at this stage was to deny any purpose to further argument, since it was being suggested that under the Act local education authorities would be

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67 J.Thomas, Plans for an Educated Democracy, Manchester 1942, p15

able to adopt whatever system of secondary education they preferred.

The Workers' Educational Association

The W.E.A. was not, of course, in any way a Labour Party body, but a number of Labour's educational planners including Tawney, Lady Simon and Harold Shearman were amongst its leading figures. The Board's reactions to its approaches were significant because they were uninhibited.[68] Although Butler was present for the Association's deputation to the Board, the officials did more of the talking than usual. A memorandum submitted in November 1941 formed the basis of discussion at the meeting in January 1942.[69]

The W.E.A. perceived that the Green Book was in essence the Spens Report with two of its recommendations omitted, viz. the view that a leaving age of 16 was inevitable and the encouragement given to experiments in multilateral schooling. Its representatives pressed these two points as being crucial to the achievment of the main Spens proposal for parity in secondary schooling.

Holmes' response was to emphasize the limited nature of the Board's aims. The office label for its plans may have been the 'New Testament', but what Holmes described to the W.E.A. deputation had somewhat humbler aspirations. He explained that the Green Book was a civil service document concerned only with those parts of the school system which were within state control, and then only with what the Board considered to be "realisable, not politically or financially, but physically within say three years after the end of the war."

Labour Party Conference

A review of Labour Party Annual Conferences from 1939 to 1942 shows how little thinking and campaigning on education was done by the party as a whole until a year after the Green Book was issued. Pre-occupied with international questions raised by the war, the thorny question of party discipline and the common front, and the urgent and immediate domestic problems caused by the war (in education,

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68 Supra p.40

69 P.R.O.Ed136/218 W.E.A.Memorandum to the Board,November 1941; Minute No.6,2.1.42
The memorandum was also published as Plan for Education.A W.E.A.Report on Educational Reconstruction,London,1942

mainly the break-down of schooling in many areas and the problems of evacuation), the Conference had little time for long-term planning.

The 1939 Conference agenda included a N.A.L.T. motion which denounced Hadow re-organisation as a system "designed to maintain the class divisions of society" and demanded "multilateral schools which would give equality of opportunity and provide Labour's ideal of free secondary education in a single type of school open to all."[70] An amendment to another motion made a similar point. But in the event education was not debated at all. In 1940 there were eleven motions on education, but all were concerned with immediate problems, especially the war-time economies in university education, and not one refrred to the organisation of secondary education. It is true that during the year the party had published Labour's Home Policy[71] which included the aspiration of "a unified system of education through which all children shall pass," but it contained no view on how secondary education should be organised, and again education was not debated at Conference. No debate on education took place in 1941.[72]

It was not until the Conference held in May 1942 at the Central Hall, Westminster that a major debate on education took place. As we have seen[73] the N.E.C. had required the Education Reconstruction Sub-Committee to reach decisions which could be included in an interim report on reconstruction and this report formed the basis of a long resolution on education which the N.E.C. now submitted to Conference. The concepts which were offered and the language used to describe them were imprecise. Speakers for the motion slipped from advocating the abolition of private education to advocating the establishment nationally of a single type of local authority post-primary school, as though they were speaking about the same thing,

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70 B.L., Labour Party, Annual Conference Agenda 1939, p62

71 Labour Party, Labour's Home Policy, undated, but must be 1939 or 1940, p99

72 B.L., Labour Party, Annual Conference Reports, 1940 and 1941. There was a debate on evacuation, initiated by N.A.L.T. in 1940, and on the same subject as a result of an attempt to refer back that section of the N.E.C.'s report in 1941. Leah Manning, the N.A.L.T. delegate, spoke on both occasions

73 Supra p.65

as indeed they might have been if the motion had called for both. In fact it did not call specifically for either. It wanted compulsory attendance by children at schools provided "or licensed" by the state; the alternative offered side-stepped the issue of private schools. Whilst it included the Sub-Committee's formula that the Board should encourage as a general policy the multilateral school, it also asked for a common code for 11+ schools with common standards of accommodation and staffing. This ambiguity was understandable in a motion which had to be concerned not only with future planning but also with interim measures.

Harold Clay, the mover, expressed anxieties about what was to become the Norwood concept of 'types of ability'. "We advocate," he said, "the application of the common school principle. We believe it is sound that every child in the state should go to the same kind of school. The curriculum will be different and will provide for varying aptitudes and for varying types of children. We have been somewhat concerned at the suggestion that has been made in regard to the grammar school, the technical high school and the modern school, the suggestion being that there is a difference between certain types of children of a character that we do not quite appreciate."[74]

There were perhaps two explanations for a lack of precision in the exposition of their goals by Labour spokesmen. On the one hand some of them were versed in the arguments of social equality on which their party's thinking had been based for many years and had not yet made the leap from the concept of equal rights to compete for places in unequal institutions to the concept of an institution which could cater for the individual needs of every child. Their thinking stopped at the point when institutional changes were needed. They were not hostile to such changes. It was a question of their

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74 B.L.,Labour Party,Annual Conference Report,1942,p142

thinking not having progressed. Shena Simon was typical of many prominent contributors to Labour's educational thinking, in that she started from a position of respecting the academic ethos of grammar schools and wanting more working class children to share it, but could not, as we have seen, initially embrace the concept of the multilateral school.[75] Yet she was soon to bridge that gulf and become one of the most ardent advocates, first of the multilateral school and then of the comprehensive school. On the other hand convinced exponents of multilateral schools like Alice Bacon, who replied to the debate on behalf of the N.E.C., were even so handling unfamiliar material. Not only did they have to theorise and proselytise, they also had to do much thinking. It is the reformer's lot that he has to plan in detail, in order to justify the proposal which he advocates, and to do this without the vast resources of the civil service.

Whatever the looseness of thinking or of expression at the Central Hall in May 1942 two things emerged clearly. Firstly the Conference endorsed the commitment to a general policy of multilateral schools and did so without controversy; no voice was raised in opposition. Secondly Clay committed the party to campaigning for an early bill. It was to be nine months before the Labour Party had the opportunity to put its views to Butler. By that time attitudes within the Board had hardened and policies been refined.

Supra p. 64

FROM GREEN BOOK TO WHITE PAPER

Chapter 4:QUESTIONS OF STRATEGY

It was a commonly-held view throughout the war that, unless an education bill were enacted before the end of hostilities, it would either be less radical or would not be carried at all. This view was often held by those who most wanted change. For example, Tawney commented that, "If Mr. Fisher's Education Act had not been passed in 1918, it would certainly not have become law in the five succeeding years. That lesson should be laid to heart."[1] Ede, when urging the early introduction of a bill observed that the 1918 Act had been passed during war and hoped that the current existence of a Conservative majority rather than a Liberal one would not prevent a similar result in the Second World War.[2] It is a view repeated approvingly by historians who draw attention to the coincidence in Britain of major educational legislation and war.[3] This analysis was extended by H.G. Wells in conversation with Butler beyond the obvious analogies of 1902 (Boer War) and 1918 (Great War) to embrace the threat of war and Britain's fear of Germany to which he attributed the passage of the 1870 Act.[4] In a more general way Wells argued that during great crises in history it is those who have their plans ready, however esoteric they are (he instanced calendar reform), who see their plans implemented. His assumption was that the prepared plans would be those of radicals. On this occasion, however, it was the Board's officials with their Green Book who were clearest in their objectives.

The basis for this view, that educational reform was best carried during war, was partly that the divisive and therefore obstructive potential of the church school controversy would be reduced when the nation was united in war against a common enemy. The long story of antagonism between those who opposed any state finance of church schools without commensurate public control and those who believed that their

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1 Introduction by Tawney to B.Drake,Education for Democracy,London 1941,p.7

2 P.R.O.Ed136/379,Ede to Butler,22.10.42

3 E.g.M.Cruickshank,Church and State in English Education,London 1963,p.113

4 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Butler to R.S.Wood and Holmes,3.10.41

children should have the right to a church-controlled education without cost either to their church or to themselves would, it was hoped, at least be more subdued whilst Hitler's bombs were dropping on church-goers and secularists alike.

The other main aspect of the argument was that war, particularly a modern war which inevitably involved everybody because of the large numbers of people required to fight and to work in munition factories and which also caused social upheavals such as evacuation, engendered a more open and democratic spirit which facilitated change.[5] Ernest Bevin best expressed Labour's expectations in a message to his union's members in October 1939. "We do not desire to serve on any committee or body as an act of patronage. We represent probably the most vital factor in the state," he affirmed, adding, "without our people this war will not be won."[6] The difficulty with this line of thought in the 1940s was that the prevailing atmosphere did not coincide with the political realities of the day. Radicals might argue on the one hand that advantage must be taken of the national unity, which might be short-lived, to hurry through legislation on education. On the other hand Churchill gave clear instructions to Butler that, whatever he did in the sphere of education, he could not legislate and must not provoke controversy which could endanger that unity and undermine the war effort.[7] There can be little doubt who was the more powerful - educational reformers or Churchill - between 1940 and 1944. Butler quoted H.G.Wells' opinion that, "unless I got into hot water he would not consider that I had done any good." Butler knew that, if he got into too much trouble, Churchill's blind eye would quickly recover its sight and all would be lost. Whatever the validity of the association between war and educational reform in the past, the evidence from the early 1940s was that the only benefit accruing to the cause of education was that the Board's officials, who had earlier rejected the main goals of the Spens Report,

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5 Examples of this view may be found, supra pp.22-24
6 Quoted in F.Williams, Ernest Bevin, London 1952, p.216
7 Churchill to Butler, 13.9.41, quoted in R.A.Butler, The Art of the Possible, London 1971, p.94

accepted that opinion had moved sufficiently for them to have to go part of the way towards it. Otherwise only uncontroversial measures could be considered. Butler was later to observe that he was encouraged by the Government Whips' Office to proceed, because for them "the beauty of the Bill was that it would keep the parliamentary troops thoroughly occupied; providing endless opportunities for debate, without any fear of breaking up the government."[8]

This view of a strategy for reform was held by many Labour spokesmen. Labour's parliamentary position was weak. The party was easily outvoted in the Commons, even without the loss of those votes cast by its members in the government. The minister concerned was a Conservative, albeit with a liberal reputation; and his deputy, although Labour, did not have a close association with his party's educational spokesmen.[9] Nonetheless most Labour spokesmen assumed that the best available deal would be one extracted from their opponents under the influence of war. They saw that, with their large Roman Catholic following in the North West and large non-conformist following in Wales, they needed the inhibiting effect of war on sectarian controversies rather more than did the Conservatives. Although one of the Board's planners saw a trend in January 1940 which he accurately foretold would lead to a Labour landslide after the war,[10] few Labour spokesmen seem to have had his insight, so that few were willing to give up the hopes of war-time legislation in favour of taking the risk of waiting for a post-war election which might not increase their parliamentary strength and which would not even have the compensating advantage of war-engendered national unity. Labour voices were amongst the loudest of those clamouring for legislation before the war ended.

The strategy of demanding early legislation was proposed strongly to the Labour Party Conference at Westminster Central Hall in May 1942.

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8 R.A.Butler, op.cit., p.117
9 Supra pp.28-31
10 Supra p.39

On that occasion Harold Clay, for the Executive, committed the party to a campaign for an early bill. Noting the Nazi use of education to destroy democracy, he exhorted Butler to use the schools to strengthen democracy. "The time to lay the foundations of the new educational structure is now while the war lasts," he declared. "We cannot afford to wait until the war is over for a new education bill." He urged the party to put on pressure whilst the readiness for change brought about by the war lasted. This rallying cry was coupled with a warning from Alice Bacon that the vested interests in the present educational structure were powerful and were "making their voices heard at the present time in the secret meetings which are going on behind the scenes at the Board of Education."[11] When Clay led a Labour deputation to Butler in February of the following year his theme was the same. Early legislation was needed, not only because people were at present receptive to change, but also because educationists needed to have now a basis for post-war planning, and industry needed to know "what kind of educational framework...[it] ... has to conform to."[12]

An alternative view was put to this meeting by Laski. He was at one with Clay in recognising that the war presented "a supreme opportunity," but he also saw the danger that whatever bill was passed would last for twenty years, and suggested that no bill at all was better than a weak bill. The same opinion, although from a conservative viewpoint, was expressed by Sir Frederick Clarke, Director of the London Institute of Education. He wanted legislation now rather than later for fear that the next Parliament "would be more radical."[13] The notion that consensus could be equated with radicalism was denounced in the New Statesman. According to this view, it commented, "We should be well on the way to a perfect educational system. But are we? Over educational reform, as over everything else that matters, looms the

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11 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Annual Conference Report,27.5.42,pp.140-141
12 P.R.O.Ed136/266,Memorandum of meeting held 25.2.43
13 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler,20.3.42

shadow of 'national unity'." Its opinion was that, before major educational reform could be carried, there would have to be agreement on what sort of society Britain wanted. "The trouble begins when any proposal for reform is specific."[14]

The attitude of N.A.L.T., as expressed by Cove and Denington in the Bulletin, varied. Their ambivalence illustrates well the dilemma of those wanting radical reform. On the one hand they joined in the chorus demanding early legislation. In June 1942 they exhorted Butler, "Produce your plans!... Let us have an education bill."[15] Yet the same issue was pervaded with scepticism about the roles of Butler and Ede, the former being seen as a skilled and experienced diplomat, the latter as a possible dupe. Ede was aware of these doubts.[16] The problem for radicals was that the post-war period could offer all or nothing. Increased parliamentary strength at the 1935 election and a clearly pro-Labour trend at subsequent by-elections seemed to indicate that voters were blaming the Conversative Party for the miseries of the 1930s. They might presage a Labour landslide at the next election which would make possible a more radical bill. But nothing was certain. War-time legislation provided a guarantee of some advance, however modest. The resolution of this dilemma might have been helped if reformers had been conscious of what Butler saw as the main reason why legislation on education was proceeding whilst legislation on other social reforms was not, viz. that he had persuaded the Treasury that it would cost very little in the immediate future and would take "at least a generation" fully to implement it.[17]

Crucial to this Labour view of strategy was its ability to influence the planned legislation. The Labour leader most concerned about this was Ernest Bevin. Of all the legislation being considered in 1943 and 1944 the Education Bill interested him most. Ede's opinion was that

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14 New Statesman, 4.7.42, p.3
15 G.L.C., A/NLT/IV/15, Bulletin, June 1942
16 B.L., Ede Diary, vol.6, 12.7.42
17 R.A.Butler, op.cit., p.117

he contributed more to it than anyone else outside the Board, taking a great interest in the details of legislative drafts, making many suggestions, and offering support for it in the cabinet without which it would not have been passed.[18] And following a meeting of home front ministers in July 1942, Ede commented that, "Mr. Bevin, as usual, proved a friend of education."[19] When reviewing the past year on the last day of 1942 Ede showed a rare animosity for the Conservatives, but coupled it with an expression of admiration for Bevin. "I think the Tories mean to dish the Labour Party of any great measure of social improvement," he wrote, "but Ernest Bevin is a tougher Labour spokesman than any they have encountered."[20]

Bevin took up the question of educational reform on his own initiative, asking one of his officials to obtain an outline of the Green Book in September 1941. He was "very anxious to know in what way Labour is to have its chance to make its influence felt in the reform of the public system of education" and sought a meeting with Butler in September 1941.[21] At the meeting, when the main burden of his argument was that the leaving age should be raised to 16,[22] he was "most insistent about the need for passing a measure of educational reform in the not-too-distant future."[23]

Ede was at pains to emphasize the identity of views between Bevin and the Board - the need to reduce the academic and increase the practical and technical content of education, the desirability of some residential experience for all pupils - and considered that the difficulties were confined to the single issue of whether the leaving age could be raised to 16 soon after the war.[24] This was glossing over a deep cleavage of opinion. The issue was whether plans were to be laid for a leaving age of 16 in terms of building, teacher training and curriculum or whether they were not. A decision had to be taken and Bevin's success in promoting Labour's objective has to be

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18 A.Bullock,The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin(2 vols.),vol.2,London 1967,p.233
19 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.6,10.7.42
20 Ibid.,31.12.42
21 P.R.O.Ed136/292,R.S.Wood to Butler,4.9.41
22 Infra p. 137
23 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Note by Butler,4.9.41
24 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,9.9.41;infra p. 140

judged according to his effectiveness in influencing that decision. As we shall see, he failed.[25]

The timing of legislation was not only a question of party strategy and advantage. Holmes raised objections in September 1941 to Butler's plans for a White Paper in the Spring of 1942 to be followed by legislation in the Autumn, arguing that it would not be possible to implement such a timetable in view of the large number of organizations to be consulted by his officials. His view was that late Summer 1942 was the earliest possible date for a White Paper and the early part of 1943 the earliest possible date for a bill.[26] Butler was not so much concerned about speed as anxious about delaying the more open discussion which he considered must take place before the Summer of 1942.[27] The difference between the two men was on the nature and breadth of public consultation, Holmes preferring an agreed policy statement which could be successfully defended against most if not all attacks, Butler having greater respect for parliamentary rights and perhaps also not wanting to isolate himself by identifying himself too closely with proposals unscrutinised by any group except those actively involved in the state school system. Butler's proposal for extricating himself from Holmes' procedure was that a tribunal should be established, consisting of M.Ps. and peers from all parties, in the Summer of 1942. The Board's plans would be put to this Joint Select Committee which could consult religious and industrial leaders and representatives of the public schools. If an agreed report emerged, an uncontroversial bill could follow. Whilst this proposal would certainly have opened discussion to all and thus satisfied Butler's wish to abandon Holmes' secretive stance, it also had the obvious attraction of transferring responsibility for all the thornier problems from Butler to the J.S.C., insofar that the committee would conduct the difficult negotiations and legislation would follow only if agreement were achieved. An indication that Butler saw his

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25 Infra p. 147
26 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Holmes to Butler,1.9.41
27 Ibid.,Butler to R.S.Wood,2.9.41

proposal as a means of containing discussion and limiting change was given by his comment after the plan was rejected. "I prefer J.S.C. to revolutions," he observed tersely.[28]

Ede, whilst seeing several party objections to Butler's scheme, came to accept it. For him it was "very desirable" to have legislation in the 1942-3 session of Parliament and he accepted with misgivings Butler's plan to achieve that timetable. To that end he was prepared to accept the Green Book, if it were proved to represent a consensus of opinion, and he regarded a solution of the church school problem as essential if the modest goals of the 1936 Education Act, which partially raised the leaving age to 15, were to be realised. Consensus on as many problems as possible would help in persuading the cabinet to allow parliamentary time and in ensuring that this time was profitably used. The attractions for him of Butler's scheme were that there was a need for wider discussion - present plans for consultation were "too narrow and circumscribed" - and that there was some precedent for outlining a scheme and then drafting it in detail through Parliament, in that the 1918 Act had been introduced in the previous session, considered in Parliament, re-drafted and then re-introduced.[29]

The obstacles which he foresaw were, however, prodigious. Representation according to party strengths would give Labour only four seats, including one for himself. Party divisions would be emphasized, with M.Ps. considering themselves bound by their 1935 election pledges on such matters as beneficial exemptions and secondary school fees. The recent "acrimonious debate" on the future of public schools would impinge on the discussions and tempers would be raised. The plan involved legislation in the eigth year of a Parliament elected in 1935 for five years. The involvement of the House of Lords would give representation to Anglican bishops to the detriment of Roman Catholic and non-conformist

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28 Ibid.,Endorsement by Butler on Ede to Butler,17.9.41
29 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,10.9.41;MSS.,unsigned, but in Ede's hand

interests. Despite these objections his final verdict was an unenthusiastic acceptance of the plan - "although I am not too optimistic of success, it should be tried."

It was not the objections of Ede, but those of Churchill and Attlee which defeated Butler's plan. Butler argued to Churchill that, "Departmental enquiries, though they help greatly, are not enough" and he promoted the idea of the J.S.C. as a means of avoiding "a dogfight in Parliament itself."[30] Churchill's reply could hardly have been more disappointing. Advising Butler to concentrate on the country's war-time educational and industrial needs, and rejecting party politics in any form for the duration of the war, he stated categorically, "I certainly cannot contemplate a new education bill."[31] If Churchill's edict had been obeyed, not only a J.S.C. but the bill itself would have been lost, but planning proceeded as though only the timing of the bill had been affected by Churchill's vote, not its existence.

Attlee's response was more considered. At a meeting with Ede he also rejected the idea of a J.S.C., and proposed a procedure which was in part followed. Discussions on the Green Book should be continued, but ought, in Attlee's view, to be widened to include the public schools. Legislation should then be considered by a committee of ministers. For Attlee the essential point was that "the government should be in control."[32] Butler also had the support of the Lord President of the Council, Sir John Anderson, who had responsibility for those major questions of economic policy which might in Churchill's phrase "raise the most difficult and dangerous political issues."[33] Anderson advised that "work behind the scenes" should be done in order that they would be ready to legislate when the opportunity presented itself.[34]

Arthur Greenwood also contributed to the discussion. As the minister with responsibility for reconstruction and a member of the War Cabinet until Churchill changed its membership in February 1942, his opinion

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30 Ibid.,Butler to Churchill,12.9.41
31 Churchill to Butler,13.9.41,quoted in R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.94
32 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,17.9.41
33 Quoted in W.K.Hancock and M.M.Gowring,British War Economy,London 1949,p.219
34 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Butler to Holmes,1.10.41

should have carried weight, but in reality he was not highly regarded. His office was in "rather a mess"[35] and he had proved ineffective as chairman of the Production Council which had been designed to co-ordinate the work of the supply ministries and to increase production.[36] His suggestion, that a short agenda of the matters to be discussed between the Board and the local authorities should be given to Parliament, does not seem to have been considered at all at the Board.[37]

Early in 1942 Attlee called in Butler to report progress. Churchill had gone with the chiefs of staff to Washington for the 'Arcadia' conference following Pearl Harbour and the entry of the U.S.A. into the war, and Attlee was head of the government in his absence. Butler's account of the meeting has a superior tone.[38] The meeting seems to have begun edgily, with Attlee's asking what was happening, and with Butler's cross-questioning to determine whether there was feeling in the Labour Party that progress was too slow. Attlee's reply was, "None at all". He thought that his party would want a debate soon. This was certainly a time when the Commons was becoming restless and Churchill felt the need for a vote of confidence, which he won almost unamimously, when he returned from Washington. But Atlee did not press for any particular policy, smiling when Butler said that he "thought Mr. Greenwood desired some educational objectives to place in his shop window" and that he would try to provide them," seeing at the same time that they were not too fly-blown!"

In April 1942 Ede again argued for an early measure and listed twelve points. These indicated the price to be paid for early legislation which avoided controversy, for they did not include raising the leaving age to sixteen or the abolition of fees in secondary schools, let alone a policy on multilateral schools.[39] The note was endorsed by Butler, "For the moment we must tackle religion." However, in October of that year, when Holmes advocated an early bill to

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35 Ibid.,Butler to Holmes,1.10.41
36 A.Bullock,op.cit.,pp.13,38,50 and 70
37 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Butler to R.S.Wood,16.10.41
38 Ibid.,Note by Butler,16.1.42
39 P.R.O.Ed136/379,Ede to Butler,14.4.42

carry out the main recommendations on 11-18 schooling with a second bill later to cover all other points,[40] Ede was quick to reject the proposal. His argument was that expectations had been allowed to rise and that, if references to social reform were not translated into legislation, the consequent discrediting of politicians could produce results "most harmful to public order and stability in any difficult times that may follow the war."[41] This argument was similar to that of Sir Frederick Clarke;[42] legislation was needed to prevent radical change not promote it. Ede was opposed at this stage to the separation of the church and educational issues; a solution to the former was essential to educational reform, since a high proportion of poor unreorganised elementary schools were run by the church. He quoted an M.P. who had said that a religious settlment was like a bottle of port and should be consumed as soon as possible after being uncorked. What was possible in the Spring of 1943 might not be possible, he argued, by the Autumn.

Butler was quite pessimistic throughout this time. In his memoirs he suggests that his reaction to Churchill's denial was one of defiance, and that he "decided to disregard what he said and go straight ahead."[43] It was certainly the case that planning continued, and Butler was of course later able to publish a bill with Churchill's support. But before that point was reached there were many difficult moments when Butler considered alternatives to a major new bill. Soon after receiving Churchill's ruling Holmes had prepared at Butler's request a note outlining how much of the Green Book could be brought about without legislation.[44] A year later, when the argument was put to him that only a major new bill and not merely amendments to existing legislation could achieve the desired goals, he replied that all would depend on the parliamentary "time offered and nature of the party truce."[45] Even in January 1943, in a speech to inspectors, he would go no further

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40 Ibid.,Holmes to Butler,20.10.42
41 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,22.10.42
42 Supra,p. 88
43 Butler,op.cit.,p.95
44 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Holmes to Butler,30.9.41
45 P.R.O.Ed136/379,endorsement by Butler on Pearson to Goodfellow, 26.10.42

than to say that he hoped to have educational reform, but he warned his audience that "there were other horses starting in the race." Ede took up the racing metaphor and observed that all the other horses were sweating whereas on the Board's coats "there was not a trace of moisture."[46] Such a sanguine view was possible only if sails were trimmed.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was perhaps a more important factor than Butler's determination in lifting Churchill's prohibition on legislation. After the entry of the U.S.A. into the war which the Japanese attack precipitated, the anxieties of Churchill about potentially devisive domestic measures lessened as the prospects of victory increased. Pearl Harbour achieved what the British Prime Minister had failed to achieve in the months before 6 December 1941. He had been haunted by the nightmare of a Japanese attack on Britain's bases in Asia and by the lesser anxiety that, even if the Americans were forced to participate in the hostilities, they would restrict their involvement to a war in Asia against Japan, whilst remaining neutral towards Germany. He had failed to move the Americans, although no opportunity had been missed to persuade them to join the war. These attempts included representations by Butler, when still an Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, to Roosevelt's personal aide Harry Hopkins.[47] Pearl Harbour achieved what all British arguments had failed to bring about, and Churchill commented, "So we had won after all."[48] With the wealth and might of the U.S.A. engaged on the British side in the war, prospects for victory were now good. Commensurately the willingness of critics to speak against the government increased, the demand within the Labour Party for contested elections grew, and the risk of a Churchill veto on legislation if any controversy surfaced, provided it was kept within bounds, was lessened. The Japanese seem to have contributed as much as Butler's determination towards the continuance of the deliberations

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46 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.6,14.1.43
47 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.86
48 Quoted in A.J.P.Taylor,English History 1914-1945,Oxford 1965,p.533

at the Board. There were still many bridges to be crossed and success was by no means assured, but there was a change in Churchill's mind. His veto on legislation was related to the paramount importance which he gave to uniting the nation in its war effort. The greatly improved prospects of victory, coming only three months after his veto, enabled the flicker of hope to remain and planning to continue.

Difficulties remained, however, and the lessening of Churchill's hostility to legislation did not mean that he was prepared to countenance the waging of party or sectarian controversies. These difficulties and Churchill's continuing influence strengthened the tendency for reformers to agree on a consensus of limited objectives - a movement epitomized by the Campaign for Educational Advance. This was a body supported by the T.U.C., W.E.A., Co-operative Union and the N.U.T. and was established to co-ordinate the demand for legislation and to prevent the church school problem from causing delay or failure. Yet the demands of the Campaign did not include even some policies which each of them supported separately. For example, the first three of these organizations were in favour of multilateral schools, and the N.U.T. favoured them, baulking only at their universal introduction, yet the Campaign did not demand them. It was the nature of their coming together that these organizations should make only limited demands, in order that they might represent a very wide body of opinion which wanted reform and would demand it, despite religious obstacles.

It was those obstacles which were in the forefront of people's minds in the Winter of 1942 and the Spring of 1943, and they presented particular problems for the Labour movement. The T.U.C. debate on the Green Book proposals, held on 9 September 1942, was dominated by the issue.[49] Coles of the Electrical Trades Union demanded that the state should not allow educational reforms to be shipwrecked and should not

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49 P.R.O.Ed136/250,G.M.Buckle (a Board officer at Liverpool) to Butler,10.9.42

"continue to subsidise sectarian education." Clay of the T.G.W.U. and the Labour Party's Education Advisory Committee insisted more discreetly that the minority could not dictate to the majority and that the general feeling was for a great step forward. "Let no sectional or special interests stand in the way," he declared. An attempt was made by two Roman Catholics to refer back the memorandum solely because of their opposition to proposals on the dual system. The reference back was defeated by a large majority, but the willingness of Roman Catholics to force the issue within the Labour movement had been shown.

A meeting of the party's Reconstruction Central Committee held on 19 December 1942 was dominated by the discussion of the dual system.[50] The Education Sub-Committee was still preparing its plans, but its chairman, Harold Clay, wanted the Centrol Committee itself to tackle the thorniest problem of all and to declare its opposition to the dual system. He argued that it could not be justified on educational grounds. Another member, George Dallas, accused the Roman Catholics of "blackmailing the Labour movement on this issue." The Welsh M.P., James Griffiths, referred to the "growing feeling that the party is afraid to offend the Catholic interest" and rejected any compromise with the Catholics. Sam Watson, the Durham miner's leader and himself a Roman Catholic, argued the opposite case. Dallas went on to issue the warning given by Laski later, declaring, "Any education act at the present time would be a compromise, therefore we should not push it. We should be committed for generations to a policy to which we are opposed." It was Middleton, the party's General Secretary, and Greenwood who warned of the danger to the party of tackling this issue. Middleton advised that they should ignore the matter, letting the Board devise "some sort of concordat" whereupon "we should leave it at that." Greenwood reminded them that the party

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50 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Reconstruction Central Committee Minutes,19.12.42

was composed of people of all outlooks and advised, "We should avoid the issue at this juncture." Shinwell, in the chair, closed the discussion by deciding that the matter should be referred back to the Education Sub-Committee with a request that they consider the "constructive effects" of the dual system and "watch the Board of Education on the concordat."

The divisions which Roman Catholics in particular could foment within the Labour Party were illustrated by an incident in April 1943. The Bishop of Pella had claimed support from Labour leaders for an increase in the proposed 50% state contribution to voluntary school building. Ede tackled Greenwood about this and was assured that there was no truth in the claim. Indeed Greenwood anticipated problems in guaranteeing Labour support for the 50%. Ede attributed the problem to mischief by Stokes, the Roman Catholic Labour M.P. for Ipswich, who was later during the Committee stage of the bill to be a tireless manoeuvrer in the interests of increased financial aid and independence for Catholic schools.[51]

The Labour Party Executive itself ran into trouble on the issue. Herbert Morrison was personally in favour of ending the dual system, but considered it politically impossible to achieve, saying that the Executive "would be too scared of their political lives to make a declaration against it."[52]

The N.U.T. conference in April 1943 was also rallied to fight for educational advance on the basis of the settlement which Butler and Ede had worked out. "No National Government was going to split the nation from top to bottom, especially during a war..., on a religious issue," Mander, the General Secretary, was reported by Ede as telling delegates. "The prospects of the Bill are about to enter a delicate political phase," he continued. If Butler and Ede gave anything to right or to left they would be lost. Teachers must support the Bill. Mander's

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51 P.R.O.Ed136/378, Ede to Butler,1.4.43

52 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,6.5.43

comments included the statement, however, that a bill which did not include raising the leaving age to 16 within three years would not be worth having.[53] He did not yet know the price to be paid for loyalty to the consensus which he was advocating. Ede did, and he ended his diary for 1942 with a note of disappointment and acquiescence. Writing about the dual system controversy, he observed, "I have had to fight hard to keep the educational cause in the forefront of political interests. I have not been helped as much by the interests dearest to my heart as I had hoped but perhaps it is asking too great a power of insight from them to expect them to understand the politicans' difficulty. I believe we have found the reasonable basis for a compromise. On it we can build a structure that will not be spectacular but which can be used as a storehouse of educational treasure from which each section can draw according to its need."[54]

Butler was later to claim that the disruptive potential of the religious question helped to bring many back-benchers into line, since they were anxious, once the Pandora's box had been opened, to close it again before the election which was bound to be held as soon as the progress of the war allowed.[55] There can be little doubt that the effect of the dual system controversy was to promote a consensus around the most modest educational reforms which would be tolerated.

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53 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,28.4.43
54 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.6,31.12.42
55 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.116

Chapter 5:PARITY VERSUS SEGREGATION

In the spring of 1942 the drafters of the Green Book returned to the question of multilateral schools, but with more open minds than hitherto. They were prompted by a paper from Savage, but also by their inability to achieve within the Hadow framework the goals being set them.

It was R.S.Wood who set the tone of the new discussion. In two discursive and intentionally inconclusive papers he reviewed the problems and the possible solutions.[1] There was less rigidity of opinion than during the similar discussion which had preceded the issue of the Green Book. G.G.Williams, who earlier had been the unrelenting defender of academic selection and segregation, did not change his fundamental attitudes, but he was willing to acknowledge that, "There is undoubtedly a wide feeling among secondary school teachers that the possibility of multilateral schools should not be excluded," and to declare himself "not unattracted" by the grammar-modern bilateral school.[2] Cleary and Charles seized this fresh opportunity to argue the multilateral school case anew, conceding that building problems made the immediate universal establishment of such schools impossible, and recommending the 11 to 13 common school as the best compromise which would give the advantages of the multilateral school without its disadvantages.[3] They envisaged all pupils going at the age of 11 to four-form entry schools with one stream transferring at 13 to grammar schools.

Although the issues discussed were the same as before, there were new emphases. One problem which exercised them more strongly now was the opinion that many of the pupils in secondary schools should not have been there or at least should not have been following school certificate courses. It was naturally the technical branch

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1 P.R.O.Ed136/300,R.S.Wood to Wallis,13.4.42;a note by Wood,undated
2 Ibid.,Note by G.G.Williams,23.4.42
3 Ibid.,Note by Cleary and Charles,undated

which held this view the most strongly and it was R.S.Wood, the Deputy Secretary and a former head of technical branch, who initiated a discussion of the matter. There was not a unanimity of opinion about the number of pupils misplaced. R.S.Wood thought that only one stream of most three-stream grammar schools should be following academic courses, and noted that in 1938 40% of pupils in grant-aided secondary schools had not taken school certificate examinations and 25% had left before reaching the age of 16. The belief was that many of these pupils should have been taking technical courses. Three possible responses to this problem were considered. Selection for grammar school courses could be improved, although this would not dispose of the objections that too many pupils wanted such courses and that there were too many grammar school places. Secondly a proportion of these abler pupils could be diverted to technical courses. This was seen as desirable in terms of industry's requirements, but the question remained of how to achieve it, whether in a bilateral grammar-technical school or in the separate junior technical colleges which already existed. The third alternative was the multilateral school, although the more specialised nature of technical courses led technical branch to the view that the multilateral school was the worst possible solution.[4]

The size of multilateral schools was regarded with more flexibility than hitherto. There was no longer an insistence that such a school need be the size of existing grammar, modern and technical schools combined. The view that a multilateral school could have about 800 pupils was linked by Woods to his belief that only one stream in most grammar schools should in any case be doing academic work.

Although the Green Book had defined parity in terms which eschewed any notion of equality, the public demand for institutions which were at least regarded as of equal worth was a major influence in the discussions. Solutions were assessed according to whether

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4 Ibid.,Note by Wallis,23.4.42

they met "the desire to get all forms of post-primary education on to more or less the same footing." In a prescient sentence Wood wrote, "The ideal of 'all-embracing' schools, giving young people in their early formative years a common training in citizenship before they diverge on to different lines of life, now commands a good deal of support in certain quarters, and is likely to get increasing support."

In spite of the discussions being more open, the participants were ultimately concerned as before with the effect of change on their own sections. They were still prisoners of the past. Wallis, for example, was ultimately opposed to any combination of schools, whether multilateral or bilateral (grammar-technical), making his stand in the end on his confidence that technical schools could achieve parity of esteem (with the grammar school, of course) on their own merits, provided that transfer at 13 was a "reality". Equally Williams, although more conciliatory in tone, advanced only arguments which favoured the retention of grammar schools.

Before all of the participants met in Holmes' room in an attempt to hammer out a consensus they had two significant contributions, one from Williams and the other from a staff inspector for classics R.H.Barrow. The influence of these contributions lay in the involvement of the two men in the work of the Norwood Committee, the former as a secretary of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council which had set up the committee, and the latter as the secretary of the committee itself.

Williams presaged the post-war result of this debate - the 11+ examination - by claiming that the grammar school could be reformed, and the problem identified by Woods overcome, by "better classification

of entrants at 11" and the introduction of an examination at 16 which did not include groupings of subjects. A revealing aside was his expression of the fear that, if the school certificate examination continued at 16 in multilateral schools, "there would be a danger of the modern pupils demanding to take it."

Barrow, in a confused paper containing many contradictions, rejected all alternatives to the existing tripartite division of post-primary schooling. Indeed, he favoured rather more divisions.[5] The better grammar schools should remain; the poorer ones should be acknowledged to be bilateral grammar-modern schools; there should be some separate modern schools, and "some should have more prestige than others, since real parity is impossible;" separate technical schools were essential because only if technical education were on its own could it develop its own ethos and reputation.

On May Day 1942 Holmes, Wood, the three section heads, their three chief inspectors, and Barrow of the Norwood Committee met in an attempt to bring the debate to a conclusion. Certain views were agreed.[6] It was held that steps already approved (a common code, equality of amenities, the abolition of fees) would go "some considerable way" towards achieving equality of status, but that, since not all schools could have sixth forms, some were "bound to carry a prestige." The impossibility of immediately establishing a multilateral school system with existing buildings was agreed, and it was noted that post-war building programmes would present opportunities to experiment with such schools. There was an acknowledgement that such schools need not be as large as had been thought; 860 pupils was thought to be a likely size, two grammar

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5 Ibid.,Note by Barrow,undated,interestingly entitled,'Note on so-called multilateral schools';no other contributer to the discussion felt the need for the qualification

6 Ibid.,Note of discussion in Secretary's Room on Multilateral Schools,1.5.42

streams and a sixth form giving 350 pupils, one technical stream giving 150 pupils, and three modern streams for four years giving 360 pupils. The technical schools were to remain separate, and the problem of the 30-40% of pupils wrongly placed in grammar schools would be solved naturally by certain grammar schools failing to produce sixth forms and becoming de facto modern schools.

Holmes closed the meeting by opining that they should not crystallise their views any further until two factors became known, viz. whether it would be possible eventually to raise the school leaving age to 16 (which would end yet another distinction between grammar and modern schools and thus make parity easier to achieve), and what Norwood would report. These remarks seem disingenuous. Holmes was suggesting that, if the raising of the leaving age to 16 could be envisaged, parity would become a more realisable aim and the case for the multilateral school would bediminished; but, as has already been seen, Holmes was opposed to the proposal of 16 as the leaving age on both educational and practical grounds. The most likely result, if there were indeed any remaining uncertainty on the matter at the Board, was for the leaving age not to be raised to 16. It took some audacity to use any such uncertainty in support of the status quo in secondary school organisation. Similarly, although there were uncertainties about the recommendations which Norwood might make, there was no doubt about the recommendations which Williams and Barrow wished it to make. As will be seen,[7] confusion over the scope of the committee's work was to enable Williams and Barrow to slacken the reins if they thought the committee would acquiesce in their wishes and to take up the slack if the committee showed any sign of taking its own direction.

Butler personally took a great interest in the problem of

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7 Infra p .114 and pp.121-124

selection and, like Cleary, was troubled by the dangers in making irrevocable choices at 11 which could affect the rest of people's lives. In October 1942 he expressed this anxiety, in the course of a note to Holmes about the possible content of the Bill, thus, "I have for long been concerned to provide an opportunity for children to revise their choice of school between the ages of 11 and 13. That is to say, I am not satisfied that the age of 11 is the one and ideal age at which children should decide upon their future lives."[8] Butler was not at this stage privy to the office discussions which had been held in the Spring of that year on the contribution which multilateral schools could make to a solution of the problem. It was not until February of the following year, and then as the result of his being given the file on these discussions by Heaton whom he had brought into his office to help with the preparation of the Bill, that Butler was confronted with the issues. His perception of the unresolved and indeed irresolvable dilemma was immediate. Having read the file over the weekend Butler asked one question. "How," he asked, "do we propose to arrange for the re-switch between 11 and 13 if we don't have multilateral schools?"[9]

An uncomplicated answer from a Board of Education official to a similar question a few months later was revealing. A Daily Herald reporter was visiting a central school in Kent and asked if children who turned out to be suitably gifted had any chance of transferring to an academic course and going on to grammar school and university. The official replied that it was practically impossible to arrange a transfer.[10] The President received his direct answer from Barrow.[11] It came as a prediction of what the Norwood Committee would say on the matter. Norwood would recommend three types of secondary school, but each would have a lower school for the 11 to 13 year olds which would be "a distinct entity" in the charge of a particular teacher. At the

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8 P.R.O.Ed136/379,Butler to Holmes,20.10.42
9 P.R.O.Ed136/300,(?Goodfellow) to Butler,26.2.43,endorsed by Butler
10 Daily Herald,19.8.43,p.3
11 P.R.O.Ed136/300,Barrow to Heaton,12.3.43

age of 11 there would be "a rough shake-out" of pupils into the three types of schools, but the curricula in all schools would be "roughly similar", although pupils in the grammar schools would start one or two foreign languages. This would be "a probationary period", a "process of diagnosis", and promotion from the lower school to the upper forms would not be automatic. The teachers in charge of the lower parts of schools would know by the time their pupils were 13 years old whether they should remain or transfer. Barrow took the casuistry of the Green Book[12] and elaborated it. The contradiction of curricula which had to be sufficiently similar to allow transfer but which could not be sufficiently similar to make segregation unnecessary was repeated. Two aspects were new. The office of the head of lower school was added and the supposed solution was given the prospective imprimatur of the Norwood Committee. The vagueness of phrases such as "rough shake-out" was an indication that the notions themselves were vague. Butler, who had seen the nub of the problem so quickly, might have been alerted. Instead he endorsed the note, "I am much comforted."

There is one curious aspect of this response to Butler, which had had the effect of satisfying him and stifling his interest in the matter. Barrow worked closely with Williams, who was himself pressing for more effective means of making the academic selection of pupils for grammar schools - the antithesis of the crude, preliminary and tentative allocation process which Barrow described to Butler. It is necessary to consider whether the whole concept of the diagnostic lower school, first explored in the Green Book, now used to allay the President's anxieties and soon to be publicly elaborated in the Norwood Report, was disengenuously devised. Certainly there was a stark contrast between the goals of Williams and Barrow as stated in office discussions and the goals of the diagnostic lower school. The contradiction was to

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12 Supra, p. 52

appear in the Norwood Report itself.[13]

There were other voices besides Savage's raised against segregation and sometimes explicitly in favour of multilateral schools at this time. Harold Laski conveyed to Ede, who passed on to Butler, his view that, "the Labour Party believed in the multilateral school." Ede's view was that in small towns the multilateral school would "form itself", and he assured Laski that the aim of everyone at the Board was to give all forms of post-primary education the same educational and social status. His examples of what he thought this meant fell short of multilateral schools, however, since he mentioned the need to prevent children who were taking technical courses from being regarded as "following inferior studies or preparing for an inferior life", and, in a reference to re-allocation of places at 13+, the need to secure "the adjustment of misfits without the infliction of stigma."[14]

Support also came in the form of a booklet, A Democratic Reconstruction of Education,[15] by four London secondary school headmasters. A significant measure of support came from secondary school interests, for many of these schools took a broader educational view than did their spokesmen at the Board. The heads' standpoint was, in their own view, "uncompromisingly democratic". Amongst common-place demands for the raising of the school leaving age to 16 and more controversial suggestions such as the diversion of public schools to other uses, they argued that the future pattern of secondary education should be based on community secondary schools catering for all children from 11 to 16 or 18, providing through a "multi-bias curriculum, the appropriate education for every child on a footing of equality."

In October 1942 the National Association of Head Teachers advocated general "cultural education" from 11 to 13 with bias only after that age, and stated, "where conditions render it possible, we

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13 Board of Education, Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools, London 1943, pp.17-18; hereafter referred to as Norwood Report

14 P.R.O.Ed136/215, Ede to Butler, 13.10.41

15 S.R.Gibson, H.W.Gilbert, H.Raymond King, F.Wilkinson, A Democratic Reconstruction of Education (with Special Reference to Secondary Education), London undated

are in favour of multilateral secondary schools with absolute fluidity of transfer from one section to another, to develop to the highest degree the varying abilities of each pupil."[16] The Assistant Masters' Association approved without any dissenting voices a resolution in November 1941 which asked that, "Full advantage should be taken of the post-war reconstruction to establish a number of "experimental secondary schools providing a variety of curricula."[17]

The National Union of Teachers did not positively advocate a multilateral re-organisation of existing secondary schools, but it did strongly attack selection at both its Easter conference in 1942 and in its representations to the Norwood Committee. At its conference it adopted a policy which seemed to assume that three kinds of school could exist without academic selection. It seemed to blur the issue by arguing that transfer to secondary schools should be based on junior school records, teachers' recommendations and parental wishes, "since no infallible instrument for the determination of types of ability at the age of 11+ has so far been invented." If I.Q.tests were to be used in addition they "should not result in children with the highest intelligence quotients being allocated to any one type of secondary school."[18] When four representatives of the N.U.T., who included W.H.Spikes - a leading member of N.A.L.T., met Norwood's committee, their arguments were all opposed to selection. Intelligence tests were denounced as fallacious; unfettered parental choice, it was forecast, would lead to all parents choosing grammar schools; transfers after 11+ were in practice rare and bound to be so. One representative argued that his own school of 700 pupils could cater for all types of children.[19] Since a member of the N.U.T.Executive, E.W.Naisbitt, was a member of

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16 N.A.H.T., Education after the War, Surbiton 1942, p2
17 London Institute of Education Library, A.M.A.Records, Executive Committee Minutes, 15.11.41
18 N.U.T., Report of Proposals by the Executive, adopted by Conference, Easter 1942, Cheltenham 1942
19 P.R.O.Ed12/479, Norwood Minutes 19, 19-20.3.43

Norwood's committee, the Union's representatives must have known that by the time of this meeting, March 1943, the die had already been cast in favour of selection,[20] and in any case they did not explicitly advocate multilateral schools as the alternative to selection. Other N.U.T.spokesmen made their position clearer when they met Butler and Ede as part of a Council for Educational Advance deputation. They explained that, "opposition to the multilateral school was confined to that type of school being made universal."[21] The N.U.T.'s stance against selection was important and an obstacle which those planning a tri-partite organisation of secondary education had to overcome.

H.G.Wells railed against selection in a Sunday Despatch article which he sent to Butler.[22] It was a rambling rumbustious attack on all that was being planned for the future of education, denouncing those plans as an attempt to maintain the class basis of English education which would thus ensure Britain's decline. In particular he denounced the intention that at 11+ children "are to be sorted out into upper class and lower class, according to the gifts they have displayed before that age."

Multilateral schools also attracted Conservative support. The strongest advocate of their establishment in the Commons debate on the Spens Report was a Conservative M.P., Annesley Somerville. He was a former teacher (Wellington and Eton) and had been President of the Independent Schools Association since 1927 . 'Multilateralism means providing a sufficient number of sides or of streams in one school in order to meet the demands of the aptitudes of the boys and girls in that school," he said, adding, "That seems to be sound." He took Spens' objections to multilateral schools - size, size of sixth form, the difficulty of finding adequate headmasters - and

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20 Infra pp.122-123
21 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,22.1.43
22 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Wells to Butler,22.6.42;Sunday Despatch,21.6.42,p.4

rejected them all. "I would recommend the gradual introduction of the multilateral system", he concluded, giving an example of how it could be achieved in his constituency of Windsor.[23]

On the other hand segregation also had its advocates, some predictable and some not. A Conservative Party report, Looking Ahead,[24] advocated a starkly meritocratic approach to education, believing that "much of the class discomfort, of which the nation has become so impatiently conscious, is due not to any dislike of educational privileges as much to the belief that these privileges are too often given to the wrong people." It wanted a system in which no child would be held back by the demands of general education, excepting only the requirements of moral and social education. The exceptional child should be "freed from the normal routine and encouraged to follow his bent to its final issue."

Less expected was a contribution from the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Committee, of which G.D.H.Cole was chairman. In January 1943 Cole sent to Butler an advance copy of a booklet, Industry and Education,[25] which had resulted from a private conference held the previous September. The tenor of its argument was as meritocratic as the Conservative Party's and it is easy to understand Cole's comment that agreement on it was reached "to everyone's surprise". Signatories included Citrine of the T.U.C., Clay of the T.G.W.U. and the Labour Party's Education Sub-Committee, Savage of the L.C.C., Norwood and Cole himself. Its pre-occupation was with an expected shortage of skilled manpower after the war and the need to ensure that no talent should remain unfound and undeveloped. It is true that the booklet asked for the raising of the school leaving age to 16 as soon as possible after the war, and ease of transfer between schools, but the aspect of it which Butler seized upon and underlined in his copy was the notion of three groups of entrants to

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23 H.C.Debates,vol.343,cols.1762-1763,15.2.39

24 Conservative and Unionist Party,Looking Ahead,Educational Aims (First interim report of the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education),London 1942,pp.35-36

25 Nuffield College,Industry and Education,London,1943; P.R.O.Ed10/272,Cole to Butler,22.1.43

industry. Here was an industrial rationale for the three types of mental capacity which was to justify the three types of secondary school.

The role of the Norwood Report in swaying the debate in favour of tri-partism was important. On the face of it concerned only with matters which arose naturally from the interests of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council, under the aegis of which it was prepared, its actual concerns and its consequences were much more profound. The system of public examinations always significantly affects the aims and content of education. On this occasion the committee under the chairmanship of Cyril Norwood, President of St. John's College, Oxford, was keen to go far beyond its terms of reference, which were "to consider changes in the secondary school curriculum and the question of school examinations in relation thereto." Its members wanted to make policy recommendations on the whole range of post-primary education. It was also the case, as will be seen,[26] that the Board's officials were content for this to happen until they realised that the committee might reach conclusions which were quite different from those favoured at the Board.

If the special role of the Norwood Committee in the evolution of the 1944 Act is to be understood, its origins and workings need to be examined.[27] In spite of the unpredictability of its chairman, the committee was from the outset dominated by the Board's secondary branch. G.G.Williams was largely responsible for the establishment of the committee and took a close interest in its work as one of the Board's assessors. Duckworth, the chief inspector for secondary education and Williams' close ally in the office debates on post-primary schooling, was another assessor. The committee's secretary was R.H.Barrow, an inspector of classics, who was Williams' and Duckworth's nominee for the

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26 Infra,p.114 and pp.160-165

27 P.H.J.H.Gosden,Education in the Second World War,London,1976, pp.367-373 gives a summary of the committee's attempts to go beyond its terms of reference and the Board's responses to these attempts

post.[28] He was based at Oxford and was therefore already close to Norwood. Barrow was a vigorous upholder of academic education and pre-selection for it. He was to emphasize the differences between the 17 year old grammar school boy and the 15 year old elementary school boy, to wonder whether the production of such different types was compatible with the same educational experience between 11 and 13, and to argue that, "We must have in mind the best education between 11 and 13, best suited for the best brains."[29]

The relationship between Williams and Norwood was close before the committee began its work. Norwood was already chairman of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council and Williams its secretary. It was the pre-war plight of the public schools, with their capital debts from earlier building programmes and their falling rolls, which first exercised their minds. In 1938 both men were suggesting that a royal commission, rather than a committee appointed by the Board, might be the best way of achieving progress.[30] Williams considered Norwood a possible chairman of such a commission whilst noting that he was "by no means popular in some quarters."[31] Williams and Holmes were to have this opinion confirmed as the discussions between them and the public school headmasters developed.

Having received a long and rambling letter from Norwood in September 1941,[32] Butler too can have been in no doubt that he was about to entrust an important area of policy-making to a man whose opinions were wide-ranging and who might have difficulty in keeping within narrow terms. Butler's relations with Norwood were also close, although quite different from Williams'. Butler had been a pupil at Marlborough when Norwood had arrived as master, changed the curriculum, and enhanced the college's reputation as a winner of university scholarships. Butler's later recollections of Marlborough were not all happy; he was out of sympathy with the excessive regard for competitive sport and regretted the lack of scope for literary and

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28 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Williams to Holmes,17.12.40
29 P.R.O.Ed12/478,Barrow to Williams,19.3.42
30 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Norwood to Duckworth,19.10.38
31 Ibid.,Williams to Holmes,24.10.38
32 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Norwood to Butler,6.9.41

debating activities. Nonetheless he regarded Norwood as having been a very good headmaster.[33]

In September 1941 Norwood was giving thought to the terms of reference of "our committee", although it seems that when Williams and Duckworth visited him at Oxford the problems of the public schools were still uppermost in their minds.[34] Even when the terms of reference were decided Norwood returned again and again to this topic, accepting that it was for others to devise a solution only when Lord Fleming was entrusted with the task.

From the outset Norwood and his committee felt entitled by their terms of reference to cover much of the ground already covered by Spens and the Green Book. It is clear that for a while the Board's secondary branch encouraged them in this. When the committee first met, after a long delay, in October 1941, Norwood's opening statement warned against going over ground already tilled by Spens, but also declared that an enquiry into examinations would be incomplete unless the content of education were also considered, and that they therefore had "an opportunity of reviewing the whole field of secondary education after the war."[35] When he listed the topics to be considered and included the age of transfer to secondary education and the whole field of post-primary education including grammar and modern schools, he was merely echoing the topics adumbrated by Williams the previous month.[36]

When Butler mooted the idea of adding to the committee people with experience outside the confines of selective education (school and university), in event, as he put it, "of the scent being too tempting in the field of the modern schools,"[37] Williams was quick to block any such move. Yet he did not accept the corollary that the committee's terms of reference should be narrowly interpreted. On the contrary he elaborated an argument which justified both its narrowly-chosen membership and its broadly-interpreted terms of reference.[38] It would

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33 R.A.Butler,The Art of the Possible,London 1971,p.10
34 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Williams to Butler,18.9.41 and Ed12/478,Norwood to Butler,20.9.41
35 P.R.O.Ed12/479,Norwood Minute 1,18.10.41
36 P.R.O.Ed12/478,Williams to Holmes,23.9.41
37 Ibid.,Note by Butler,27.11.41
38 Ibid.,Williams to Holmes,1.12.41,approved by Holmes 2.12.41

be unwise, he argued, to add members qualified to speak for other sectors of education. This would tempt the committee to go beyond its terms of reference. It might even be unconstitutional, bearing in mind the committee's origin as an off-shoot of the S.S.E.C. Moreover it was unnecessary, since Duckworth could be relied on "to see that the views of his colleagues in elementary and technical branches at the Board were properly considered." The committee should therefore remain as constituted, but the secondary (i.e.grammar) school curriculum could not be considered "in abstraction from the organisation of schools" and the place of these schools "in the general system of post-primary education." He gave three examples of topics which would have to be considered: the age of transfer, the proportion of children to be selected for grammar schools (and therefore the proportion left over for the other types of school) and the selection of university entrants which was bound to affect entrance to technical education. At this stage he even wanted the committee to express views on the contribution which the public schools should make as the boarding element in the selective school system. Thus the committee's right to express a view on the whole spectrum of post-primary education was preserved, whilst the membership of the committee was confined to representatives of selective schools, universities, examining boards and local authorities. Holmes endorsed this line of reasoning.

Another matter of interest was the alarmed reaction of the Board's assessors to Norwood's assumption that they were full members of the committee. This was clearly a mistake on the part of Norwood who had misunderstood the relationship between the Board and its advisory committees, but his mistake was understandable in view of the actual contribution made by the officials to the committee's decisions. An indication of Williams' attitude to the committee members was given by his

irritable reaction when they did not do as he wished. For example, he expressed his annoyance at the way in which members "challenge the issues at every point" and especially that a member representing an examining board should express views (opposed to Williams' own) on the direct grant school question.[39] Butler cleared up the matter in a conversation with Norwood in May 1942.[40] He ruled that no language could be used which "indicated that the Board's officers had actually caused a majority view to prevail in the committee." He agreed that officials "should pull their full weight...and should fearlessly indicate their point of view, particularly on the subject of the direct grant schools and of the examinations." They should be described as "assessors" and "it should be made clear that it was not they who actually took part in deciding the point of view which the committee wished to adopt by a vote." Butler was doing no more than explaining what was normal Board procedure, but the anxiety of the Board's officials at Norwood's innocence, and the vigour of Butler's response indicated both the Board's increasing anxiety at Norwood's waywardness, and Williams' concern that the apparent independence of a committee which he was manipulating should be preserved.[41]

The potential breadth of Norwood's policy review led to a clash with Sir Will Spens and it is interesting to note that Holmes gave his support wholly to Norwood. The matter came to a head in the Spring of 1942 when Norwood's committee was only in the early stages of its work. Spens' initial approach to Butler was, like Norwood's, the result of his anxiety about the future of the public schools. Spens had telephoned Butler on the matter the previous summer.[42] Spens then met first Greenwood, who was generally responsible at that time for post-war reconstruction, and afterwards Butler in October 1941. The public schools still caused anxiety,

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39 Ibid.,Williams to Barrow,22.6.42
40 Ibid.,Note by Butler 26.5.42
41 Ibid.,Williams to Savage,1.8.42 shows how Williams attempted to sway the committee indirectly.Himself favouring internal assessment,and fearing either an anaemic recommendation on the matter or a divided committee,he urged Savage to give "a clarion call"outside the committee in order to influence it.
42 P.R.O.Ed136/268,Note by Butler,30.7.41

but by now Spens was more agitated at the scope being given to Norwood's committee. Spens was "not amicably disposed towards the Norwood committee or towards the Board." Butler sought advice from his officials on whether this "rivalry" between the two men, as he saw it, would harm the cause of education.[43] Holmes tried to set Butler's mind at rest by interpreting Spens' hostility as jealousy that anybody but himself should be pondering the secondary school curriculum,"a subject which he regards as peculiarly his own." Butler was further calmed by Holmes' opinion that the educational world would be "more ready to put their money" on Norwood than on Spens.[44]

When Spens met Butler again in March 1942 he was even more agitated about Norwood's activities. He expressed "great alarm" at what Norwood was doing and "great distrust" of Norwood himself. In his view it would be "nothing less than a scandal" if Norwood were to rework the ground gone over by his own committee. Butler's response was to flatter Spens by observing that the Green Book owed much to his report, and to reassure him by letting him know that Norwood's wings had already been clipped to some extent. He refused, however, to place further limits on the committee's discussions and hoped "to get as much out of Dr.Norwood" as he could.[45]

Butler was, nonetheless, somewhat troubled by the validity of Spens' argument. "There is something in his point about the Consultative Committee," he wrote. Indeed there was. Spens' report had been prepared by the Board's Consultative Committee at the Board's request and had special reference to grammar schools and technical high schools. If the Board wanted advice on the future structure of these aspects of post-primary education it was already to hand. If it wanted further advice the Consultative Committee was a more obvious place from which to seek it than a committee set up by the

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43 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler 16.10.41,sent by R.S.Wood to Holmes
44 Ibid.,Holmes to Butler,20.10.41
45 P.R.O.Ed136/131 Note by Butler,20.3.42

Secondary Schools Examinations Council, which by its very constitution was a link between the Board and the school certificate examining bodies, and was therefore concerned with more narrowly-defined matters. Having had a very carefully-prepared report from Spens late in 1938, it was strange that the Board, having sanctioned the establishment of a committee by the S.S.E.C. less than three years later, should be tolerating, even encouraging the discussion of similar topics.

It was even stranger that Holmes' efforts should have been devoted at this very time to undermining Spens' status, by devising ways of killing off the Consultative Committee of which he was chairman. In a memorandum to Butler only a week before Spens' second meeting with the President, Holmes expressed his view that the committee had "outlived its usefulness."[46] The contradiction in his advice revealed his true purpose. Whilst claiming that, even if the war had not intervened, there would have been nothing left for it to consider (a decidedly sanguine view of the state of education in 1939 and one hardly compatible with the role devised for Norwood), he wanted to substitute for it a small committee to advise ministers and officials informally. It is true that this alternative was partly "to placate outside opinion", but it was also desirable "on merits" and "to assist the Board". His problem was that the Consultative Committee was established by order-in-council and was therefore a statutory body which the Board could not cancel at will. A new order-in-council could, however, alter the composition of the Consultative Committee, reduce its size and make no provision for a chairman, thus giving Holmes what he wanted. As Holmes remarked, "The question of the chairmanship is not free from difficulty." His remark related to the office, but his hostility was also to Spens personally.

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46 Ibid.,Holmes to Butler,14.3.42

Holmes' argument ran thus: There was nothing left for the Consultative Committee to do, but the Board could not wind it up without legislation and in any case did need a small group of private advisors who would meet not under a Board-appointed chairman such as Spens but under the chairmanship of some-one inside the Board, possibly even the President. For Holmes to wish to see the end of the Consultative Committee was entirely in keeping with his view of how educational policy should be made. His preference was always to seek privately the views of men in education whom he knew personally, rather than those of committees which could be thought, albeit informally, to represent interest groups. His taste for private rather than public discussion[47] received some support from one of Churchill's rulings. The Prime Minister had said that the number of departmental committees should be reduced during the war. Yet when Holmes considered this as an obstacle to the establishment of Norwood's committee, he tried to overcome it by not making any public announcement about the committee's existence.[48] This recommendation was eventually rejected by Butler,[49] who had had his fill of Holmes' penchant for secrecy over the Green Book. Only a strong motive would had led Holmes to abandon a statutory committee and establish an entirely new one against the spirit of the Prime Minister's ruling.

The question is therefore why Holmes should have taken up the matter at this particular time, especially when he was content to see Norwood's committee concerning itself with issues which sprang less naturally from its constitutional basis than they did from the Consultative Committee's. The answer may lie in the differences between Spens and Norwood, their committees and what they were likely to recommend. The former represented both an actual[50] and a possible source of opposition to the policies being promoted by the Board,

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47 A.W.S.Hutchings,interviewed by the present writer,1.11.78, thought that a factor in Holmes' passion for secrecy might have been the "famous row" which his father,who preceded him at the Board, had had with the N.U.T. over a confidential circular criticising teaching standards in elementary schools

48 P.R.O.Ed12/478,Holmes to Williams,21.3.41

49 Ibid.,Note by Butler,25.9.41 on Holmes to Butler,23.9.41

50 Supra p.15 Its view that the raising of the school leaving age to 16 was inevitable is an example.Infra p.114 Spens had pressed this point strongly to Greenwood

whereas the latter might offer support and, if it did not, could be told to narrow the area of its discussion and keep more strictly to its terms of reference. The distaste which the Board had for the Spens Report, and especially for its independence, has already been noted. Further evidence exists in the correspondence of a member of the committee - Shena Simon, then a Liberal and Tawney's nominee as his successor when he had retired from the committee in 1931. During the deliberations which produced the report she constantly lamented the pressures to reduce commitments which might achieve parity between the types of post-primary school.[51]

Holmes gave a further indication that Norwood's committee was designed very much to serve the Board's purposes when he justified the attention being given to the grammar school curriculum, whilst the curricula of primary schools and the other projected types of secondary schools were being neglected.[52] Norwood's committee was necessary, he argued, because of the effect on the grammar school curriculum of external examinations. No committees, or even conferences of educationists, were necessary on the curricula of the other schools; the Board's own inspectors could do the job. He claimed the support of Duckworth, the senior chief inspector, for his view. Duckworth was, of course, from the secondary branch of the inspectorate and a close ally of Williams and Barrow in their work on the Norwood Committee. The distinction between the grammar school curriculum and that of other schools was the relevance to it of external examinations. That alone, according to Holmes, made it necessary for its curriculum to be the subject of a report. Yet, as will be seen, when that report was published it commented on the mental capacities of children for whom it recommended technical and modern schools. A narrow distinction justified its existence, but there was to be nothing narrow about its recommendations or their consequences.

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51 J.Simon,'The Shaping of the Spens Report on Secondary Education, 1933-38',British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.XXV,no.1, February 1977,pp.63-80;and vol.XXV,no.2,June 1977,pp.170-185

52 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Holmes to Butler,20.10.41

The Board's officials could not be entirely confident that Norwood would produce a report to their liking. For a while it looked as though they might find themselves with a very different set of recommendations from the one desired. The committee was not immediately and whole-heartedly willing to adopt tri-partism. Early in its deliberations it considered a multilateral solution to the problem of pupils' varying needs and continued thereafter to flirt with the concept. Initially the view was held that the multilateral school could be regarded as "valuable in the limited cases in which it was possible."[53] At the next meeting the concept was rejected, but only because of the difficulties of incorporating technical education as it then existed into a multilateral school, for at the same time the committee's "adoption" of bilateralism was recorded. It was intended that at the age of 11+ pupils should have a choice between a technical education and a general education, the latter embracing existing grammar and senior elementary school curricula "frequently given in the same buildings."[54] In October 1942 various incompatible views were expressed.[55] On the one hand it was held that differentiation at 11+ of pupils into three types was "difficult or impossible", since the years before 11+ "provided insufficient evidence for any serious attempt at assortment". On the other hand it was held that grammar school education must begin at 11+ if tuition in languages were to be preserved. Later in the same month a paper trying to define a multilateral school more clearly was adopted.[56] It posed three alternatives: a school of at least 1,500 pupils, a school of 800 pupils but with an "uneconomic" grammar school element, and a grammar-modern bilateral school with a disproportionately high grammar school element alongside separate modern schools.

Irksome to Williams and Barrow as all of this was, it was the

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53 P.R.O.Ed12/479,Norwood Minutes 3,5-7.1.42
54 Ibid.,Norwood Minutes 4,12-13.6.42
55 Ibid.,Norwood Minutes 10,2-3.10.42
56 Ibid.,COM 38,Multilateral;Norwood Minutes 12,30-31.10.42

committee's hostility to the direct grant system which provoked them to take firm action. For a while the two men had been hopeful that a statement urging the retention of the direct grant schools would come from the committee. As soon as it became obvious that a vote on this and similar topics would go against them,[57] the whip was cracked and there was no hesitation in defining narrowly and precisely the matters which were henceforward to be regarded as within the committee's competence.

This was done in a ruthless way. Accepting that they could not obtain from Norwood all that they wanted by allowing a free-ranging discussion, Williams suggested to Barrow that they might have to drop any further consideration of "administrative problems" - the Board's term for the structure of the schools system. Barrow should draft "a short general chapter on lines which...would command agreement."[58] It seems that this was the document presented to the committee in October 1942 and discussed in November.[59] Its object was clearly to confine further discussion. In contrast to the previous attitude of the Board's officials, emphasis was now given to the word 'Examinations' in the S.S.E.C. of which Norwood's committee was an off-shoot. Members were advised that their recommendations must not "appear to rest upon something which was not the major concern of the Committee". That would invite "gratuitous criticism". Their opening should instead be based on a sequence emphasizing that they had started with a study of the traditional grammar school curriculum, had noted the expansion in the demand for secondary education and the consequent need for a more varied curriculum. They could then see that the traditional grammar school education was not suitable for all secondary schools and could consider what other types of school were necessary. Thus they could move from factors within the province of the S.S.E.C. to

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57 This topic is considered more fully in Chapter 7

58 P.R.O.Ed12/478,Williams to Barrow,22.6.42

59 P.R.O.Ed12/479,COM 40 Layout of the Report;Norwood Minute 12, 30-31.10.42;Norwood Minute 13,13-14.11.42
It is not possible on the available evidence to be certain that this was the paper intended by Williams.The Minutes of the Norwood Committee are frequently uninformative.For example,the formal withdrawal of the public and direct grant school questions from the committee's consideration was not mentioned in the minutes, and Minutes 21-24,which cover the final drafting of the report, record only the names of those present and the date of the next meeting.

a possible layout of secondary education "undertaken with a view to clearer definition of the grammar school."

This had the effect of ruling out of order those contentious matters especially the future of direct grant schools, upon which the officials could not persuade the committee, after a strenuous effort, to their point of view. It left Williams and Barrow free to put before the committee a draft chapter in which a view was taken of the whole field of post-primary education, seen from the grammar school viewpoint. A.W.S.Hutchings, the representative on the committee of the Assistant Masters' Association, has recalled "a remarkable discussion" about multilateral and bilateral (i.e.grammar-modern) schools which lasted a whole morning. Noting that in some areas at that time almost half the pupils aged 11 and over went to grammar schools and that some of these schools had perforce developed non-grammar 'sides', he has recalled that there was by the end of the morning general agreement on the broad division of pupils into two groups - those taking and those not taking public examinations - in the context of multilateral schools. When members returned from lunch the officials produced a paper defining three types of child and, although contrary to the tenor of the morning's discussion, this was quickly adopted. Hutchings, who clearly admired Williams and thought him to be "a remarkable man" who "knew his schools", also considered that, "He would not have cared a jot about terms of reference if the committee had agreed with him."[60] Norwood argued at the November meeting for amendments, and these made the tripartite organisation of post-primary education even more specific. In the revised paper, secondary education was defined as being of three broad types and the nption of a common curriculum between the ages of 11 and 13 was described as "the limit of allowable variation."[61]

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60 A.W.S.Hutchings,interviewed by the present writer,1.11.78
61 P.R.O.Ed12/479,COM 48,Lay-out of the Report (Revised)

Barrow and Williams had not only terminated discussion on matters which they had been hitherto content to have discussed, but had also inserted their own philosophical and administrative opinions on the future shape of secondary education. What was to become the most significant part of the report in influencing the shape of post-war secondary schooling, viz.Chapter One, was largely the work of officers from the Board, was in disagreement with much of the discussion which had preceded its presentation to the committee, but was accepted with little discussion because it was issued in the form of an adjudication on the committee's terms of reference.

It was in this way that the notion of three types of child came about. The report saw the problem in terms of having "to reconcile diversity of human endowment with practical schemes of administration and instruction". It accepted what it considered to be the de facto solution of this problem, viz. that "rough groupings" had established themselves, and dismissed as "not necessary to pursue" the awkward questions of whether such groupings could be justified in psychological terms, or of whether the differences between children were of kind or degree. The report then identified the three groups and gave a pen portrait of a typical child from each.[62]

Firstly there was the pupil who loved learning per se; he could reason, was interested in causes and could take a long view; he had the sensitivity to enjoy aesthetically the aptness of a phrase or the neatness of a proof. Next there was the boy who had "an uncanny insight into the intricacies of mechanisms, whereas the subleties of language construction were "too delicate" for him; knowledge had to be "capable of immediate application"; if his

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62 Norwood Report,pp.2-3

intelligence were not great, "a feeling of purpose and relevance may enable him to make the most of it." The last group, the existence of which had been recognised only in recent years, was more interested in concrete things, in facts; "relevance to present concerns is the only way of awakening [his] interest"; "his horizon is near". Apart from the sense of novelty in having discovered and acknowledged the existence of a child type which was, according to this analysis, to describe the majority in any age group, the most useful discovery, from secondary branch's point of view, was that this last group differed from the other two in that their "mental make-up does not show at an early stage pronounced leanings in a way comparable with the other groups." Nonetheless they had needs which had to be "met in as definite a manner as those of other groups." It is impossible to imagine an analysis of children's minds which would have fitted more conveniently the pattern of post-primary schooling which Williams favoured and which was in essence the existing system. The sensitive and reasoning child obviously needed a grammar school; the practical type obviously needed a technical school; the more limited types could not attend either of these schools, because they did not reveal aptitudes so early, but, having recognisable needs, had to have schools of their own.

Taken unawares, not perhaps realising the significance of what they were putting their names to or appreciating that it was against the drift of their earlier discussions, but in any case coming from universities, school certificate boards or secondary schools, the committee accepted this analysis of children's intelligence which was put to it late in its deliberations. No research was done. The groupings in post-primary education which already existed, because of the history of schools and the administrators' reluctance to do more than adapt the existing framework, were given the semblance of an educational, even a philosophical basis.

Within seven months of these crucial meetings the committee's report was on Butler's desk. The following month, July 1943, it was in print. It was an effective piece of work by Williams and Barrow.

Norwood's report recommended, as Barrow had forecast it would, both the more highly selective grammar school and the diagnostic lower part of all schools including grammar. The problem of existing grammar schools was diagnosed as lack of homogeneity, resulting from the need to educate all the pupils who attended them merely because such schools were the main source of secondary education. They had been required to "serve too many ends." Norwood therefore recommended what Williams and Barrow wanted, viz. that grammar schools should be academically more selective, so that they could "perform their proper task without distraction." The report went on immediately to describe the diagnostic lower school, not, it is true, as such a flexible institution as Barrow had described earlier to Butler, but it was nonetheless clearly the same beast. Allocation at 11 would "necessarily be tentative in a number of cases," there would be "a generally common curriculum", and at 13 there would be "a review of all pupils" with no automatic right to continue in the same school.[63] This contradiction, between the school with a more clearly defined role on the one hand and a closer similarity to schools with different roles on the other, was the means by which the separateness and the more selective form of entry to the grammar school was to be defended against those who favoured equality and parity. It was the same formula as that used in the Green Book.[64]

Such a contradictory policy could never be translated into reality. Either the highly selective nature of the grammar school would have to be sacrificed or the general nature of 11 to 13 education in all secondary schools and re-allocation at 13 would never become possible. The suggestion that both of these mutually

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63 Ibid.,p.15
64 Supra pp.52-53

exclusive features of secondary education policy could co-exist served only to dissuade men from pondering the matter further until such times as post-war development plans had to be submitted. By that time the attitudes of those in charge of the Board and of local authorities would have a bearing on the decisions made, provided that the Act were to allow flexibility in the organisation of secondary education.

The report did not totally reject multilateralism. It rejected the inclusion of technical education in any such school on the grounds that association with local industry was an element in the success of existing junior technical schools. It allowed the possibility of a grammar-modern bilateral school, but contrasted what it considered to be the essential largeness of such schools with the English tradition that schools should be small enough for the headmaster to know every child. The possibility of experiment "within the limits of these circumstances" was envisaged.

Holmes was pleased with Norwood. Whilst including the Board's usual disclaimer, although in a very mild form, he welcomed the report as "a valuable contribution from an independent source to the solution of the educational problems now engaging public attention."[65] The views held by Williams and Barrow had been given to and accepted by a committee, so that the Board could now welcome back its view as from an independent source. Their hand had been strengthened, not only against Cleary but also against the spokesmen for the widely-held aspiration of equality in secondary education after the war.

In spite of the influence of the Norwood Report and the clear intention at the Board that the impending legislation should not fundamentally alter the Hadow means of re-organising post-primary education, there was to be no reference in the Bill to three types of school, and it was Ede, the Labour Parliamentary Secretary at

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65 Norwood Report, Prefatory Note. Cf. Holmes' Prefatory Note to the Fleming Report a year later, when he stated that Fleming's recommendations would "require careful and detailed consideration by the Board."

the Board, who ensured the omission. The relevant phrases, although they were to be amended in detail at various stages, were drafted by him early in 1943,i.e. before Norwood's committee reported.

The parliamentary draftsman's initial essay had allowed for three types of secondary education clearly differentiated by curriculum and length of school life; general secondary school finishing at the age of 15, technical school finishing at 16 and advanced secondary school finishing at 18. During the afternoon and evening of 24 February 1943 Ede worked on his own draft, aiming to produce "a comprehensive definition which would avoid this differentiation."[66] The following day he completed a long note criticising the original draft. His own wording for the clause which was to have such importance for the next thirty years and more, and which was to be the subject of litigation in the 1960s and 1970s, is worth quoting in full. He wanted "schools for providing for senior pupils secondary education of sufficient variety of types as to secure a sufficient choice of studies suitable to the ages, abilities, aptitudes and requirements of the pupils, including at appropriate stages practical, technical or commercial instruction, regard being had to the probable length of the school life of the pupils and to the organisation of adequate and appropriate advanced instruction for those older pupils who intend to proceed to a college, university or other place of further full-time education."[67] This draft, as sent to Holmes for discussion within the Board, differed from Ede's draft of the previous day in only one significant way: he added "aptitudes" to the criteria by which the sufficiency of variety in types of education was to be judged.

The question to be considered is whether on the one hand Ede

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66 B.L.Ede Diary,vol.7,24.2.43
67 P.R.O.Ed136/389,Ede to Butler,25.2.43

was facilitating the achievement of the long-term Labour objective of multilateral schools or at least the short-term goal which Cleary had sponsored of common schooling from 11 to 13, or whether on the other hand he was objecting to the administrative straitjacket which too specific legislation would impose on future governments and local authorities - whether his purpose was political and educational or merely administrative.

The evidence suggests that Ede's ideas on secondary education were not settled. In 1941 in a facetious memorandum of a conversation he had had with Mary Hamilton, who had advocated that children from different backgrounds should go to the same school,[68] he "expressed the view that what was needed in education was not unification but diversity."[69] Hamilton's paper had reached Ede via Arthur Greenwood's Reconstruction Office, and Greenwood's views seemed to echo Ede's, for he wanted to end the division of schools by parental income and replace it by "a variety in schools adjusted to the variety in children's needs and capacities."[70] Shortly afterwards Ede wrote to Butler that, "The common school for all up to 11 or 13 years of age with suitable diversified schools for the next stage to be entered by appropriate merit alone is an ideal difficult to realise in an old-established class-ridden society such as ours."[71] Less than six months later he was arguing that, "the right age at which to have the common school is from 11 to 16 years, when pupils are graded more and more by aptitude than by attainment. That is the period at which the respect of a craftsman in one line should be secured for a craftsman in another line by association in a common tradition, a common life and a realisation of the dependence of each on the other."[72] That sounds like a committed advocacy of the social case for the multilateral school, but two factors have to be borne in mind. The context was

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68 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Comments by M.A.Hamilton on the Green Book,23.7.41
69 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,6.8.41
70 Ibid.,Education Policy.Memorandum by A.Greenwood,undated
71 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,9.9.41
72 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,28.1.42

a note in which Ede had condemned the idea of abolishing preparatory schools and establishing common schools at the primary level in most extreme terms, stating bluntly that some children were not clean enough for others to be required to sit alongside them, and he seems to have advocated the common school from 11 to 16 because he wanted to end on a positive note and, one can suspect, wished to balance his views on primary education realising that Butler may have found them surprising and even shocking.[73] The other point to note is his distinction between aptitude and attainment, and his belief that education after the age of 11 was determined more by the former. He seems to have accepted that children from different backgrounds would tend to show aptitudes in certain directions, attainment being of less significance, and would follow these into certain jobs. What was needed was respect by all workers, at whatever level, for other workers. He developed this theme in a London speech after the publication of the White Paper, expressing the hope that "we should learn from this war that a skilled craft was at least as creditable as a clerical occupation", and noting that competition for Surrey County Council scholarships to grammar school was much stronger now than when he had won his place as the thirty second candidate in the results list for thirty-two places.[74] The separation of aptitudes from attainment was significant for him. By the Autumn of 1942 he had reached the opinion that choice of secondary school could be achieved by administrative action and that legislation was not necessary for this purpose. His conception of secondary schools was now much more open, for he hoped that "the width of the curriculum in the new secondary schools will enable a wider choice to be exercised inside any given school than is now the case."[75]

When Ede saw the draftsman's first essay his denunciation of the section which differentiated three types of secondary schooling was on the ground that it was "in direct contradiction to all I have been trying to do,"[76] and he made it clear that, "not merely the wording

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73 Infra p.158
74 Speech to National Women Citizens' Association in London, reported in Times Educational Supplement, 30.10.43, p.522
75 P.R.O.Ed136/379, Ede to Butler, 22.10.42
76 B.L., Ede Diary, vol.7, 24.2.43

but the spirit of the suggestions will require drastic attention."[77] But, as he explained to Holmes,his own draft was based on the section of the 1921 Act relating to central schools, "which had enabled senior schools to develop in diversity suiting themselves to local needs."[78] Although Ede's own draft did not state that the variety of education need be provided in different schools and therefore left the possibility of multilateral schools open, it did specifically refer to practical, technical and commercial instruction, and mentioned different lengths of secondary schooling and advanced education for those continuing their education after school. It seems clear, therefore, that it was the rigidity arising from a legislative commitment to three types of school which offended Ede and that his own draft was not intended to promote the multilateral school, but was rather aimed at ensuring that there might be greater variety than that encompassed by the three types envisaged in the parliamentary draftsman's paper. That this was the case tends to be confirmed by the reaction of Holmes and Williams to Ede's criticism, which they shared even though they wanted tripartism. When noting this, Ede observed that he expected Holmes' constructive suggestions to be different from his own. Williams visited Ede in his room at the Board to say that he was "disturbed" by the original draft, but this was, as Holmes noted, because Williams had found six types of voluntary school! Also supportive of this view is a much later comment attributed to Ede by Leah Manning, a member of the N.U.T.Executive and a Labour M.P. in the 1930s. Her words need to be read with caution, for she writes in a flamboyant style and with a deep dislike of Cove and an emptional attachment to Ellen Wilkinson, but she quotes Ede as saying to her, "Don't encourage this comprehensive school idea. When it's sound educationally, O.K., where it's prompted by philosophical or political ideas, it's so much poppycock."[79]

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77 P.R.O.Ed136/389,Ede to Butler,25.2.43
78 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,25.2.43
79 L.Manning,A Life for Education,London 1970,p.188

Ede's draft was accepted by others at the Board. He did not participate in the discussion and his diary therefore sheds no further light on his motivation or that of the other contributors. He returned from a weekend visit to his constituency at South Shields to be told by Butler that the others (Williams, Cleary, R.S.Wood and Butler himself amongst them) had had a meeting the previous Friday afternoon, that they had found his draft very helpful and had adopted it in shortened form. In fact the only alterations were textual: the first "sufficient" was changed to "such"; the second "sufficient" was omitted; the phrase "including at appropriate stages practical, technical or commercial instruction" was omitted and replaced by "and practical courses" after "studies"; "of the pupils" after "school life" was omitted; everything after "older pupils" was omitted. The clause was thus simplified by the removal of even more references to existing courses, but retained the notion of variety in the types of education provided. When Ede had time later in the day to compare his draft and the one now agreed he noted that the omitted phrases were of "no great significance" and that the clause "by its broad general enabling outlook suited me very well."[80] The latter phrase is significant. Ede had removed references to a specific pattern of secondary education and had left future governments and local authorities considerable freedom to determine, as they saw fit at the time, the organisation of secondary education in particular areas. Butler was later to tell A.W.S.Hutchings that he had tried to write the three types of school into the Bill, but it had proved impossible to do so.[81]

Later drafts gave greater emphasis to particular aspects of the clause. For example the third and fifth draft had reference to the nature of the curriculum to be followed in particular schools, but did not specify particular curricula and did not therefore limit local authorities, when submitting development plans, to any particular organisation of schools.

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80 B.L.Ede Diary,vol.7,1.3.43
81 A.W.S.Hutchings,interviewed by the present writer, 1.11.78

Thus by the Spring of 1943 it was intended that future legislation should contain no references to three types of school and was, in the sphere of secondary education, to be of an enabling nature. It was equally clear, however, that nobody at the Board had changed his mind about the pattern of secondary schooling which he wished to see emerge after the war. All would now depend upon the attitudes of the government and local authorities at that time.

Chapter 6: RAISING THE LEAVING AGE

If an end to segregation were not to be achieved and parity between separate schools were to be the lesser goal, raising the school leaving age to 16 would become an even more crucial goal for the Labour Party. The argument for it was not only that education was regarded as desirable per se and therefore more of it for everyone a political aspiration, but also that it was a pre-requisite for the achievement of equal status by the different types of school in the eyes of parents. There were some who thought that parity of esteem was an unattainable goal even with a common length of course. There were few who thought it attainable without it. Since 16 was the age at which grammar school examinations were sat, and there was no proposal to alter that (although of course the Norwood Committee had been set up to change the rules of 16+ examining), raising the school leaving age to 16 in modern and technical schools was regarded as essential if these were to compete for parental favour. As the N.U.T. put it in its 1942 Conference resolution, "The minimum range should be the same whatever type of school attended."[1] The Executive of the Assistant Masters' Association made a similar point, stating that, if modern schools were to have a leaving age of 15, it would mean that "the popular demand for 'secondary education for all' was not being met."[2] In a leader headed, "Half Measures" the Times Educational Supplement declared, "No system of education for democratic living is possible within a framework erected on the foundation of a leaving age of 15."[3]

Ernest Bevin was the most forceful Labour champion of raising the leaving age to 16, and it is clear that his initiative was personal and not departmental. After a conversation between R.S.Wood of the Board and Tribe of the Ministry of Labour, Wood wrote that Bevin had "taken up the question of educational reform of his own motion" and that his views were "apparently quite his own."[4] As Minister of Labour Bevin could talk to Butler as an equal, although he had to contend with the

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1 N.U.T., Report of Proposals by the Executive adopted by Conference Easter 1942, Cheltenham 1942

2 London Institute of Education Library, A.M.A. Records, Executive Committee Minutes, 15.11.41

3 Times Educational Supplement, 25.7.42, p.363

4 P.R.O. Ed136/312, Note by R.S.Wood, 9.9.41. Tribe was a principal at the Ministry of Labour; he was appointed Secretary at the Ministry of Fuel and Power in 1942

hostility of the Board's officials who thought that it was not his concern and that he knew nothing about the matter. Another problem was the attitude of Sir Frank Tribe, who worked closely with R.S.Wood in coping with what both seem to have regarded as the initiative of an uninformed layman.[5] An even greater problem for Bevin was the insinuation that the Labour leadership and its education lobby were out of step with their own supporters in the country who, it was alleged, did not want a longer school life for their children. This view had been put, even before the drafting of the Green Book, by Davidson, the Board's accountant-general, who argued in November 1940 firstly that the quality of education in state schools was too low to justify an increase in the amount of time children were compelled to remain in them, and secondly that day continuation schools were a better way of extending the education and training of manual workers beyond the age of 14 let alone 15. The "gratified surprise" at the character and personality of elementary and grant-aided secondary school products, whom he and others had apparently met for the first time in appreciable numbers in the first months of the war, did not extend to the intellectual content of the education which they received. As a result there was in his opinion a "marked absence of enthusiasm" for any raising of the leaving age beyond 14. The only exception to this general opinion was amongst Labour leaders, but he felt that even these were only "giving lip service to a formula." There was "an equal unanimity in expecting, indeed demanding, some form of continued education beyond the compulsory age."[6]

Coupled with the suspicion that the working man was more concerned with the loss of income from his children than with the continuance of their education, this argument was powerful because it suggested that the man in the street could be expected to support the status quo rather than follow the leadership of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. Davidson's

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5 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Wood to Butler,4.9.41;Wood to Tribe,5.9.41
6 P.R.O.Ed136/212,Note by D.Du B.Davidson,6.11.40

arguments gave those who opposed the raising of the leaving age the opportunity to separate the main body of the Labour movement from its intellectual and trade union leadership. The opposing of raising the leaving age to 16 and day continuation schools as rival claimants for scarce resources was to be a recurring theme for those at the Board who did not wish in any case to raise the leaving age. Bevin's role was the more important because of his working class and trade union background. He could not be dismissed as an intellectual socialist out of touch with the common man. "We must not strive to make giants, but to elevate the human race," he had declared to teachers of Columbia University on the eve of the war.[7]

Ede's role was again crucial. If he had strongly advocated the raising of the leaving age to 16 within the Board and allied himself to Bevin at the Ministry of Labour, the cause of raising the leaving age would have been greatly strengthened. In fact his attitude seems to have been hesitant. In his interview with Mary Hamilton in August 1941, when he seems to have been in a point-scoring mood, he argued that the Spens Report "had not recommended 16 as the leaving age," but had merely regarded it as "inevitable". Ede recorded in his diary that he added, "So did I in the distant future." He pointed out to her that the 1936 Act, in raising the leaving age to 15, had done nothing about bringing senior elementary school accommodation and staffing up to secondary standards. To do that and to raise the leaving age to 16 would more than double the costs of senior elementary schools.[8] Steeped in the history of state education since 1918 he seems to have regarded raising the leaving age to 16 in the same light as the Board's officials - something which in due course would come about in the slow evolution of secondary education on Hadow lines - not as an essential reform to be given priority in the interests of

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7 Quoted in F.Williams, Ernest Bevin, London 1952, p.227

8 B.L., Ede Diary, vol.1, 5.8.41. Ede was wrong about the Spens Report, which had said, p.311, after arguing strongly for parity between schools, that, "Parity among schools...implies the raising of the minimum leaving age to the same general level in all schools... The adoption of a minimum leaving-age of 16 years may not be immediately attainable, but in our judgement must even now be envisaged as inevitable!"

parity and equality. He was in this sense the Board's rather than the Labour Party's man. The historical, administrative and practical difficulties weighed more heavily than did political factors. He certainly accepted the officials' view that raising the leaving age to 16 within three years of the end of the war was "impracticable" on a national scale, and thought that an alternative way forward would be to give local authorities the right to raise the leaving age for their areas by by-law when local conditions made it practicable to do so.[9] This alternative created its own problems and was eventually rejected by his Party spokesmen,[10] but he continued to advocate it from 1941 to 1943.

Bevin's first attempt to influence policy-making caused excitement at the Board. At Bevin's request Butler met him early in September 1941.[11] Bevin had heard of the Green Book's existence and was anxious to press his views on the President. His opening remarks aimed to set aside the religious aspect of educational reform; echoing Marx's phrase he dismissed religion as chloroform and hoped that Butler would keep out of the "toils of the Archbishops." His main argument was in favour of raising the leaving age to 16 and against day continuation schools. In his note of the conversation Butler recorded the strength of Bevin's views on the leaving age. "He was quite clear about this," wrote Butler, "and thought that if we did not do it now we should not have another opportunity for another twenty years." Bevin offered practical help in the form of Ministry of Labour camps which could accommodate 270,000 people and provide valuable residential experience as well as additional school places. Butler outlined the practical difficulties and summoned in support of his policy "the point of view of parents, whom we should probably not carry with us." Bevin's reply to this point was that "parents should not have as much say as they had done in education, nor should the

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9 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,13.10.41

10 Infra p.174

11 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Note by Butler,4.9.41;R.S.Wood to Butler,4.9.41, and 8.9.41 enclosing the Ministry of Labour's record of the conversation

teachers." He was insistent that Butler "must at any rate think about the raising of the leaving age to 16," although Butler gave no hope that it could be carried out. The emphasis in the Ministry of Labour's note of the meeting was rather different, for there Butler was quoted as saying that "raising of the age to 16 was certainly not excluded from consideration," but the facts in the two accounts agreed. Bevin wanted the age raised to 16; Butler did not.

The reaction within the Board to this 'interference' was hostile in the extreme. R.S.Wood's alarm was due to his enthusiasm for the idea of day continuation schools. He was keen to enlist Butler's support for these, and regarded opposition to them as coming mainly from proponents of raising the leaving age to 16. "That is," he wrote, "of course, extremely doctrinaire, and I imagine that Mr. Bevin has no sympathy with that particular attitude." In a sense this was the case of the biter bitten, for many Labour advocates of a leaving age of 16 favoured day continuation schools also, but for the 16 to 18 year olds. They had thought of the two goals as rivals only when the day continuation schools had been put forward as an alternative to school-based full-time education for the 14 and 15 year olds. It was the authors of the Green Book - the Board's officials - who had set the order of priorities which favoured day continuation schools by taking in November 1940 as the question to which their thoughts were to be addressed, "Accepting the principle of day continuation schools, what should be the school leaving age and what should be the educational breaks during school life?" The day after the meeting between Butler and Bevin, Wood wrote to Tribe in order to arrange that they should lunch together.[12]

Holmes' reaction was less considered and rather petulant. The notion of raising the leaving age to 16 at once was "hardly one which a responsible person with even a nodding acquaintance with the educational conditions of today would make," he wrote.[13] Apart from the practical difficulties, his chief objection was based on the principle that

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12 P.R.O.Ed136/292, R.S.Wood to Tribe, 5.9.41
13 P.R.O.Ed136/312, Holmes to Butler, 8.9.41

completion of Hadow re-organization must precede raising the leaving age to 16. Otherwise, "to compel children to remain until the age of 16 in an all-age elementary school would be a fraud on the parents and a gross injustice to the children themselves." His historical perspective dominated his thoughts. Since it had taken twelve years from 1927 to 1939 to increase the percentage of 11+ children in the senior departments of elementary schools from 8 to 52, leaving 48% still in all-age schools, he could not see any prospect of the task's being completed in less than ten years from the end of the war, especially without a very radical solution to the voluntary schools problem. The ability to offer "a decent and appropriate education" to all pupils attending senior schools was for him not only a pre-requisite of compulsory attendance at such schools to 16, but one which he saw no prospect of achieving. Equality and parity were not amongst his ideals. A week later Holmes sent a longer paper to Butler, again putting the case against raising the leaving age.[14] His apology for its length showed his contempt for amateurs, amongst whom he clearly included Bevin since his paper was in response to Bevin's overtures. Length was "inevitable if the difficulties are to be made clear to the layman," he wrote. He suggested a formula for a clause in the Bill which would enable the government, if it wanted to include raising the leaving age to 16 in principle, to do so without actually having to commit itself to a time-scale. His proposal was that the leaving age should be raised to 15 by an appointed day (i.e. a firm date) and to 16 "from such date as the Board of Education may by order determine." This formula conceded the principle without requiring any government at any time to do anything to achieve it. This was a crucial note, for it gave Butler what was henceforward to be his usual line of argument, having the merit that it relieved him of any necessity to discuss raising the leaving age to 16 itself, since there was no need to argue

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14 Ibid., Holmes to Butler, 15.9.41

against the principle when there was no legislative obligation to do anything about the matter.

Ede's contribution was supportive of Bevin's ideas in general, but lacked his sense of the need to plan urgently for raising the leaving age to 16 and to give priority to overcoming the practical problems involved. He claimed the support of Butler's predecessor for the notion of camp schools in which pupils would spend a minimum of three months and linked Bevin's preference for a greater practical bias in education to the Board's own desire to reduce the number of pupils receiving a traditional academic education. In his view the difference between Bevin and the Board could be narrowed to that of practicalities. On this question Ede accepted the Board's view and proposed a compromise on the basis of raising the leaving age to 15 at once with "possibly permissive powers" given to local authorities to raise the age to 16, and with the Board's having the right to raise the leaving age to 16 when sufficient progress had been made to do this nationally. The only significant difference between Bevin and the Board, in his view, was over the practicalities of carrying out the reform soon after the end of the war.[15]

A month later Bevin renewed his pressure, sending to Butler a note headed, "Summary of Proposals for Post-War Developments in Education and Juvenile Employment,"[16] and addressing an Institution of Production Engineers' luncheon on educational reform.[17] On both occasions he took the opportunity to argue for a leaving age of 16.

In hisnote Bevin conceded nothing to his opponents. On the contrary, he wanted the leaving age raised to 16 "immediately after the war" and only accepted a delay of up to three years after the war if practical problems were insuperable. Even then he wanted the maximum of three years to be stipulated in the legislation. He offered

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15 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Ede to Butler,9.9.41
16 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Bevin to Butler,11.10.41
17 Ibid.,Tribe to Wood,16.10.41,enclosing an extract of the speech made by Bevin on 26.9.41

solutions to both of the main problems - buildings and staff. Accommodation could be provided by an emergency programme and could include hostels, training centres and camps already owned by the government. As for staffing, not only could additional teachers be obtained, but also teachers who were more appropriately experienced for the new type of education to be provided, if the government were to "widen the field of recruitment for teachers and call upon people outside the academic world." At the luncheon Bevin commented that the raising of the leaving age to 16 was already twenty years overdue.

The first draft of a reply from Butler began, "I myself would not rule out a school leaving age of 16 as an ultimate goal," before rehearsing the familiar catalogue of practical difficulties. Butler sought the "advice of Bournemouth", i.e. Holmes, on the draft and asked for a "sympathetic" tone in his reply to Bevin. It is significant that the second draft omitted the opening conciliatory sentence of the first, and thus did not even hold out the hope of 16 as an ultimate goal for the school leaving age.[18] Ede's contribution showed a lack of commitment to his own party's policy and a lack of support for Bevin. Noting that Bevin was demanding "strict Labour Party policy" he reiterated his view that three years was insufficient time in which to make the necessary preparations.[19] Ede's comments highlighted the difference in attitude between the Labour spokesmen: for Bevin the goal was to be pursued with vigour and practical obstacles were to be acknowledged only in order that they should be overcome, whilst for Ede the worthy goal would come about in due course as the Board's plans for the re-organisation of all-age elementary schools gathered pace.

The letter to Bevin which finally emerged from these deliberations was conciliatory in tone but uncompromising in content.[20] For example, Butler noted that it would be impossible at the end of war to raise the

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18 Ibid.,Two drafts of the letter, and Butler to Wood,all undated
19 Ibid.,Ede to R.S.Wood,?10.41(day of month not given)
20 P.R.O.Ed136/312,Butler to Bevin,6.11.41

leaving age to 15, let alone 16, and "simultaneously to introduce that parity of treatment of all forms of post-primary education which both you and I desire." He suggested that two stages were needed: raising the leaving age to 15 at the end of the war provided that there was no further serious damage by bombs to school buildings, and a provision in the Bill to improve all senior schools to the level of existing secondary schools by a date determined by the building priority won for education after the war. There was only one new argument. Butler expressed the apprehension which he felt because of uncertainty about the kind of education which should be provided for the children who would be required to stay on at school if the leaving age were raised to 16. This would have been more convincing if the Board's officers had not taken steps strenously to prevent a review of the secondary modern curriculum similar to that which they had instituted under Norwood ostensibly to consider only the grammar school curriculum.[21]

In January 1942 Bevin, accompanied by his Parliamentary Secretary, Tomlinson, again met Butler who was accompanied by R.S.Wood. Although Butler began with a similarly uncompromising statement that "after consultation in many quarters" he could not agree to the raising of the age to 16 in one step and kept firmly to his order of priorities in which day continuation took precedence over a leaving age of 16, Bevin and Tomlinson tried to demolish the Board's arguments. They wanted the Board at least to take in a bill the power to fix an appointed day, even if such a day were not specified in the bill itself. They linked this to the need to plan for an adequate supply of teachers, and Bevin offered to help by building up a reserve of teachers in the colleges and by supporting the Board in any plans to provide refresher courses for teachers now in the armed services. Bevin argued that the new curriculum should be planned now and that a pre-requisite for this was a commitment to a leaving age of 16. This would make it clear to

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21 <u>Supra</u> pp.114 - 115 and p.120

employers and trade unions that they must think in such terms when fixing their standards and industrial practices. When discussion centred on the part-time education of young people over the age of 15, it became clear that the Board was not thinking of a compulsory scheme. It was thought that, whilst engineers might need part-time continued education, young cotton operatives might not. Bevin denounced this attitude, arguing that they should abandon the notion of boys and girls from 15 being "completely at the disposal of the employers."

Bevin and Tomlinson made no progress, however. Butler acknowledged the wide support in education and in enlightened industrial circles for the raising of the leaving age to 16. Indeed he used it in defence of his decision to avoid a commitment, taking the view that raising the age as a goal was safe when it had such widespread support. In practicable terms, however, he could not see its being achieved for another seven to ten years. Even more revealing was Holmes' reaction after the meeting. Butler's private secretary, Sylvia Goodfellow, sent a note of the meeting to Holmes, drawing his attention to Bevin's offer about the supply and retraining of teachers, and innocently enquiring whether this called for "early action." Holmes replied tartly, "I trust not. These are matters which will engage the attention of the forthcoming committee..."[22] McNair[23] was called forth by Holmes, whilst an offer of priority treatment for teacher supply by the Minister responsible for Labour and National Service was spurned.

If Bevin were almost alone amongst those with the power directly to influence the content of impending legislation in demanding a leaving age of 16, he did not lack support from important figures both within and outside the Labour Party. Indeed Holmes himself acknowledged not only that "the majority view" wanted the raising of the leaving age to 16 to be included in the Bill, but also that the

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22 P.R.O.Ed136/292,Memorandum of meeting on 23.1.42, with endorsements by Goodfellow,5.2.42 and Holmes,6.2.42

23 Sir Arnold McNair, Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool University, was appointed chairman of a committee in March 1942 to enquire into the supply and training of teachers. The committee's report was issued as Board of Education,Teachers and Youth Leaders,London 1944

majority would want it "in such a way that it is bound to come up for consideration by Parliament at some specific date."[24]

The "majority view" certainly included such an authoritative figure as Spens. He had, of course, already taken the view in his pre-war report that the raising of the leaving age to 16 was "inevitable".[25] In a conversation with Arthur Greenwood in October 1941 he reiterated this opinion.[26] Greenwood himself shared Spens' views. Indeed, Butler thought that Spens was responsible for Greenwood's "conversion". Greenwood's own views, as expressed in a note reacting to the Green Book, included a leaving age of 16 and, if this were not immediately possible, a curriculum based on the assumption that it would be achieved very soon.[27]

Support also came from H.C.Dent, editor of the Times Educational Supplement. He favoured a more radical action than raising the leaving age, developing a concept which Bevin himself supported. This was that young people should be regarded as being under the guardianship of the state until they reached the age of 20 or 21. Bevin saw this in terms of full-time education at least until the age of 16 and then, if in industry, under supervision at least until the age of 20, so that the educational and vocational needs of young people would be protected whether they were in education or in employment.[28] The T.E.S. leader on 4 October 1941 took this idea further and argued that the concept of any leaving age was out-of-date and should be replaced.[29] Dent wanted every child below the age of 21 years to be a "ward of the community". In the sense that it wanted an end to the separation between schooling and society it was also an attack on the inadequacy of the day continuation principle and supportive of Bevin's ideas. Some supporters of 16 as the leaving age, however, saw at once that Dent's idea gave opportunities which their opponents could exploit. Lady Simon wrote to ask whether the T.E.S. would happily countenance the abandonment of 14 as a leaving age, making

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24 P.R.O.Ed136/312,Holmes to Butler,20.10.41

25 Supra p. 136

26 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler of conversation with Greenwood, 16.10.41;and P.R.O.Ed136/312,An extract of the same note

27 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Greenwood,Education Policy,undated

28 P.R.O.Ed136/312,Note by R.S.Wood,9.9.41

29 Times Educational Supplement,4.10.41,p.475. In the edition of 18.10.41,p.493 Dent made it clear that he did not want the abandonment of statutory school attendance, but wanted instead an "obligation to attend wherever the education authority directs until the period of tutelage be at an end." The argument was partly over the definition of "school"

the point that some date had to be stipulated and that 16 was better than 14. She advanced an argument which was concerned as much with the future of grammar schools as with the achievement of parity with those schools by the other types of secondary school, drawing attention to the fact that, without compulsion to attend until they were 16, many children capable of taking grammar school courses refused to go to a school where they were expected to remain until that age, whilst others who did accept places left early thus 'wasting' the place.[30] Harold Shearman wrote in similar vein on behalf of the W.E.A. a fortnight later.[31] The following Easter the N.U.T. demanded the same minimum age in all types of school.[32]

Bevin's position vis-a-vis the Board of Education was not strengthened by the apparent attitude towards him of his party's leader, Attlee. In January 1942 whilst temporarily head of the government in Churchill's absence, Attlee summoned Butler to report progress on educational reform. Butler's account of their meeting is rather supercilious in tone. If his account is accurate, Attlee seems to have been rather indiscreet about members of his own party and Butler seems to have enjoyed this. One such indiscretion was Attlee's comment that, "Mr. Tomlinson knew more about education than the Minister of Labour."[33] Bevin's position was further undermined by G.D.H.Cole. In a meeting between himself, Laski and Butler, after which the last was relieved to note that the Labour spokesmen had been "far from revolutionary", Cole gave his order of priority for reforms. Raising the leaving age to 15 was his first priority, day continuation schools were second; raising the leaving age to 16 was not mentioned at all.[34] This was a hostage to fortune which Board officials who were opposed to the leaving age of 16 were to use on several occasions, especially since Cole headed the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey.[35] Indeed, Holmes had already advanced the argument in a note to Butler the previous month. He wanted to

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30 Ibid.,11.10.41,p.487
31 Ibid.,25.10.41,p.499
32 Supra p. 134
33 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler,16.1.42
34 Ibid.,Note by Butler,12.5.42
35 The Nuffield College Reconstruction Survey was established at the request of the government at the beginning of 1941 and with the co-operation of two ministers who had responsibilities for planning post-war reconstruction - Lord Reith,Minister of Works and Buildings, and Greenwood,Minister without Portfolio. Its working method was to conduct local surveys, which were evaluated at Oxford, where conferences were also held. Its Education Sub-Committee published some of its views in three books: The Open Door, London 1943;Industry and Education, London 1943; Religious Education, London 1943

concede a leaving age of 15 "immediately after the war" and "in advance of the completion of re-organisation... if only to keep children in the 14-15 age group off the Labour market."[36] But thereafter his order of priorities was as determined before the Green Book was written, i.e. day continuation schools were to precede the raising of the leaving age to 16.[37]

Ede's contribution to the discussion on strategy which was taking place within the Board at this time was even less helpful to Bevin. Listing twelve points to be included in early legislation he did not include raising the leaving age to 16 at all.[38]

The view of those at the Board, including Butler, who thought that workers were not in favour of raising the leaving age gained support in the response to a survey, the results of which were available to Holmes by October 1942. The answer to a question about worker attitudes to the raising of the leaving age and whether the exemptions of the pre-war Act raising the age to 15 should continue read, "The replies to this question surprised me... very surprised to find a substantial majority against raising the leaving age at all. The replies revealed that the workers are not yet ripe for raising the leaving age, especially if it involves any financial sacrifice to the parents."[39]

As 1942 ended and 1943 began Bevin became totally isolated. He had one more opportunity to press his point. In December 1942 Butler presented a paper to the Lord President's Committee of the War Cabinet, the committee for dealing with domestic affairs. This gave a broad outline of the proposed educational reforms. It asked for the raising of the leaving age to 15 as soon as possible after the war "with possibly, provision for subsequent raising to 16."[40] Bevin asked for a precise date for the raising of the leaving age to 16. He seems to have received no support from Attlee and Morrison. Butler rehearsed the Board's objections and stated that the Board favoured the introduction of a new system of further education before the raising of the

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36 Only Holmes and Churchill used this argument. Vide p. 180

37 P.R.O.ed136/379, Note by Holmes, 13.4.42, discussed with Butler, 15.4.42

38 Ibid., Ede to Butler, 14.4.42

39 P.R.O.Ed136/377, A type-written extract without heading, endorsed in Holmes' handwriting, "See Miss Goodfellow, M.G.H. 12.10.4?(year is unclear)

40 P.R.O.Ed136/378, War Cabinet. Lord President's Committee. Educational Reform. Note by the President of the Board of Education, 10.12.42

leaving age to 16.[41] That was the end of the matter.

Early in the new year Holmes commented that it would not be possible to fix any appointed days in the planned legislation.[42] Ede replied at once that the Labour Party would not be satisfied unless an appointed day for raising the leaving age to 15 were specifically named in the Bill, although even for the age of 15 he thought that the party might accept a phrase such as "the end of the present war unless His Majesty shall by Order in Council have previously fixed the appointed day."[43] Ede did not even mention raising the leaving age to 16, knowing and accepting that the die had by now been cast. At the end of March he attended the Administrative Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party and reported to Butler the same day that, 'although no vote had been taken, it was clear from the discussion that the Party in Parliament was "obviously in favour of introducing day continuation schools prior to the raising of the school age to 16." He summed up the views of his fellow M.Ps. thus, "There will be great disappointment if 16 is not mentioned in the Bill, but the feeling this morning was that considerable educational improvements in the arrangements for non-bookish children between 14 and 16 years of age will have to be made before the schools will be suitable places for retaining them for so long."[44]

By the Summer of 1943 the situation was clear. The school leaving age would not be raised to 16. If any mention of the reform were to be made in the Bill it would be merely as a gesture to the widespread demand for it, but with no intention of ever doing anything to achieve it. Any attempt to tie the hands of the Board for the future and to introduce a deadline for the introduction of the reform would be resisted. The Labour leadership, as represented by Attlee and Morrison in the cabinet and Ede at the Board, fully accepted the position. The Parliamentary Labour Party, at least as interpreted by Ede, could be

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41 Ibid.,Conclusions of a meeting of the Lord President's Committee, 18.12.42
42 Ibid.,Note by Holmes,4.1.43
43 Ibid.,Ede to Holmes,5.1.43
44 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,30.3.43

relied upon to acquiesce in the Board's order of priorities which placed a new system of part-time education ahead of continued full-time education for the 15 year old age group. Bevin, alone of Labour spokesmen in office, had fought for the reform which was an essential element in the party's programme, and he had lost.[45]

45 A.Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin (2 vols.) vol.2, London 1967 does not mention Bevin's important but unsuccessful efforts to carry this reform.

Chapter 7:PUBLIC AND DIRECT GRANT SCHOOLS

The question of the public schools exercised men's minds greatly in the late 1930s and early 1940s, in spite of the problems of the war. It has been held that the question engaged the attention of the general public more than the controversies over the dual system which took up so much of Butler's time and that of his officials.[1]

What was not known to the general public or to those in the Labour Party and elsewhere who were making vague demands for 'reform' was that anxious discussions had been started before the war, not with the object of opening up the public schools, but with the aim of solving their financial crisis, possibly by means of subsidies in the form of fees paid on their behalf by local authority-nominated applicants. Many public schools had embarked upon major building programmes in the 1920s. Those which were inadequately endowed found themselves in financial difficulties by the late 1930s, when the demand for places fell and the fee income declined but the capital charges of the earlier expansion still had to be met.

The concern for the schools at the Board was out of proportion to the number of places which they provided. It reflected both the emotional regard for public schools which their former pupils who were now senior officials at the Board had for them, and the inevitable overlap in curricular matters between maintained, voluntary and independent secondary schools. There was a problem for the Board's officials, however. The public schools were so jealous of their independence, of each other but even more of any public authority, that they could not be expected to welcome any approach from the Board. Equally the Board had no statutory right, let alone obligation, to concern itself with such schools at all. Not only was this a fact, it was one which the Board's officials, because of their sympathy with the status and aims of the public schools, were wont to proclaim loudly

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1 P.H.J.H.Gosden, Education in the Second World War, London 1976, p.332

whenever suggestions were made that the government should 'do something' about the public schools.

Williams, head of secondary branch, had very close contacts with the public schools, as did Holmes himself. They resolved their dilemma by discussing a solution unofficially with some public school headmasters, whilst denying publicly that any such conversations were taking place. Their dialogue started with Canon Spencer Leeson who not only was Headmaster of Winchester and soon to be chairman of the Headmasters' Conference, but also had the considerable advantage of having worked at the Board itself from 1919 to 1924, i.e. as colleague of Holmes and Williams, when he had held posts as private secretary to the Parliamentary Secretary and to the Permanent Secretary.

Leeson outlined the problem in a confidential memorandum to a few other headmasters, a copy of which he sent to Holmes in October 1938.[2] "I foresee that practically every school in England will be faced with the problem of falling numbers," he wrote. "I foresee a period of years during which governing bodies will commit themselves to expenditure upon equipment and general window-dressing, in the hope of attracting parents; and a systematic hunting after boys by competitive bribery and reductions in fees and wholesale advertising. The rules against advertising that the Conference [H.M.C.] have adopted will, I fear, be tacitly abandoned and a new atmosphere will come into English higher education, with serious effects upon the morale of it and upon the values which we try to uphold." The danger then would be that governing bodies, "overwhelmed with debt", would apply to the Board which would have to set up a statutory commission "with wide powers for the closure of superfluous schools." What he wanted therefore was a policy which would enable the public schools to continue without

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2 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Leeson to Holmes,14.10.38

government or statutory control but with some guidance and possibly help from the Board.

His view was shared by Holmes,[3] Norwood[4] and Spens.[5]. Norwood was alarmed at "the progressive lowering of professional standards" amongst headmaters, many of whom were "spending half their time in commercial travelling and touting on preparatory school doorsteps." The effect on educational standards of this competition also alarmed him. "All sorts of intriguing illegal commission paying and competitive reduction of fees are taking place", he reported. "The effect is that the worse drives out the better currency: the advertising headmaster succeeds, the headmaster who minds his proper business, and puts education first, fails." Headmasters were being appointed, not on merit, but for their ability to ingratiate themselves with preparatory school headmasters. Norwood preferred a royal commission to a departmental committee as the means of finding a solution, perhaps mindful that the report of such a committee, chaired by Chuter Ede in 1932 and concerned with the lesser question of private school inspection by the Board, had not been well received by the schools and had not been implemented.[6]

Holmes was clear about one thing. If an unequivocal request came from the schools themselves for the Board to institute some machinery for devising a solution, the Board would have a duty to respond, but the request would have to come from the schools and the Board would have to appear to be responding to it. As he wrote to a colleague in the Cabinet Office who had approached him as a public school governor, "The Government would be incurring a heavy responsibility in declining to set up a royal commission if formally asked by the H.M.C. to do so."[7] Williams was to spend part of his not inconsiderable energies for almost four years in ensuring that the call

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3 Ibid.,Holmes to Leeson,13.10.38
4 Ibid.,Norwood to Duckworth,19.10.38
5 P.R.O.Ed136/268,Spens to Holmes,24.7.41
6 Board of Education,Private schools and other schools not in receipt of grants from public funds,London 1932. Other members of the departmental committee were Holmes,R.H.Charles(the elementary school H.M.I.) and Mrs.Leah Manning;there were sixteen members in all.
7 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Holmes to Howorth 27.2.39

eventually came to which the Board could respond. Holmes was also to give freely of his time, for example meeting public school headmasters and governors at the United Services Club for dinner in December 1938 because "the subject is one which interests me greatly."[8]

Williams was initially optimistic that the schools would respond quickly to his approaches. Before the end of October 1938 - the month in which the conversations between him, Holmes and Leeson began - he had drafted the terms of reference of a royal commission and had begun drawing up lists of possible members to serve on it.[9] It was not going to prove quite so straightforward. Some of the public school headmasters regarded their independence as more important than survival. When Norwood outlined his anxieties about the public schools in a Spectator[10] article, he called forth upon his head a vitriolic denunciation from the provost of Eton, who thought that it was "pure totalitarianism" and that "the Brown House at Munich is evidently his spiritual home."[11] The notions which called forth this attack was that there was a need to reduce "the class division" between public and state schools, that the private schools would have to compromise by accepting transfer from preparatory to public schools at the age of 12 for example, that public schools should admit at least 10% of their intakes from elementary schools, and that financial problems should be further solved by adopting more Spartan regimes similar to that which already existed at Christ's Hospital. Norwood's motive was not philanthropic or even concerned primarily with social factors. It was the same as Leeson's. He wrote that, "the nation cannot afford to lose them, or allow them to pass into unmerited decay." Nonetheless he was denounced by a leading public school figure. Not all Conservative local authorities accepted the principle that private schools could both retain their independence and receive public subsidies. When Williams discussed this idea with Sir Henry Richards, deputy chairman of

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8 Ibid.,Holmes to Elliott,22.11.38
9 Ibid.,Williams to Holmes,24.10.38
10 Spectator,9.2.40,pp.175-176;16.2.40,pp.206-207
11 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Lord Hugh Cecil to De La Warr,21.3.40

Hertfordshire Education Committee and a governor of Mill Hill school, he was surprised to learn that Richards' attitude was "no control, no public money". Williams was surprised that the representative of Hertfordshire should have this opinion in view of "the feudal character of the area."[12]

When the Headmasters' Conference rejected the proposal of a royal commission by 51 votes to 35,[13] Leeson campaigned for a departmental committee to be set up by the Board.[14] It took another three years of negotiations, much soul-searching by the schools themselves, the nurturing of "an extraordinary and unprecedented confidence on the part of the schools in the Board"[15], and the activities of Geoffrey Fisher, then Bishop of London and a future Archbishop of Canterbury, to bring this alternative proposal to fruition.[16] Williams' and Holmes' success came with the appointment of Lord Fleming's committee in July 1942.

In addition to Holmes' usual preference for secrecy, the need for discretion arose from his wish to help schools for which his Board had no responsibility and which in any case were not rushing to ask for help, and this led him to the very bounds of honesty if not beyond. The whole nature of the exercise was that it was sub rosa. That did not prevent whispers. Harold Shearman showed knowledge of the talks taking place during a W.E.A. deputation to Greenwood, who was responsible for post-war reconstruction plans, in January 1941.[17] Leaks led in turn to questions which demanded answers from Holmes. In response to an unsolicited and unwelcome offer to serve on a committee of enquiry into the public schools, Holmes explained in March 1940 that the Board was unlikely to set up such an enquiry because it had only "a very slight connection with the public schools."[18] A reply from Ramsbotham, when he was President, in the House of Commons also lacked frankness. Asked whether the Board and public schools were holding discussions to make the

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12 Ibid.,Note of conversation with Sir Henry Richards by Williams, 10.10.41
13 Ibid.,Leeson to Holmes,29.5.39
14 Ibid.,Leeson to Williams,29.6.39 enclosing Leeson's memorandum of 9.6.39 to members of the H.M.C.
15 Ibid.,Leeson to Holmes,9.1.40
16 A full account of these negotiations is given in P.H.J.H.Gosden op.cit.,pp.334-345
17 P.R.O.Ed136/260,Note of W.E.A.deputation to Greenwood,undated
18 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Holmes to Haig-Brown,13.3.40

schools "more accessible to the public", he replied, "No sir."[19] Similarly a reply from Ramsbotham's predecessor, De La Warr, lacked honesty as a description of the Board's role, although it is possible that he may have been kept in ignorance of the negotiations' origins and that he may have maintained his own integrity. Writing on the reasons for the royal commission which still at that time looked a possibility, he claimed that, "The move came entirely from them (i.e. the H.M.C.)".

On this question, unlike others, Butler was at one with Holmes in favouring secrecy. Before meeting the Bishop of London he wrote to ensure that their conversations would be "absolutely private". As he explained, "If we do not meet unofficially we cannot talk to the benefit of those great institutions which you are doing so much to help."[20] Whilst he was waiting for the call from the public schools, which he and Fisher were trying to bring about, he too had some difficulty in answering critics. He told Sir Frederick Clarke, for example, that he "would if necessary poke the fire, but did not feel inclined to do so until I found some hope of flame."[21] His Board had of course been poking the fire since 1938.

When the establishment of Fleming's committee was announced, it was accepted as being concerned with the opening up of privileged institutions. When Butler made his announcement in the Commons, Cove rose and asked, "Is it to report upon the facilities that the public schools will provide for students from, say, elementary schools to get into them?" Butler replied, "Yes, I think the honourable Member has summed up the position beautifully."[22] That it was intended partly to devise the means of channelling into those institutions public funds without which some of them might not be saved from extinction was unknown to the public. The committee's terms of reference, which were "to consider means whereby the association

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19 H.C.Debates,vol.359,cols.1119-1120,18.4.40
20 P.R.O.Ed136/129,Butler to Fisher,4.10.41
21 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler,20.3.42
22 H.C.Debates,vol.380,col.1416,16.6.42

between the Public Schools... and the general educational system of the country could be developed and extended", seemed in line with the prevailing desire, if not to end privilege, at least to blur its edges.

There are two important aspects of the Labour Party's approach to this question. The party's own objectives were vague; and the party, like most other groups, was not privy to the events of 1938-42 and was completely ignorant of one of the purposes of Fleming.

Whilst the Labour Party had a general feeling, shared by quite a wide spectrum of opinion in the early part of the war,[23] that there was something wrong about the public school system, it was not successful in analysing its dissatisfaction and had hardly even begun to evolve a policy for tackling 'the problem'. It was in the position of feeling that a problem existed, it could argue in general terms against snobbery, privilege and the anti-democratic effects of the old boys' network, but it was far from having made up its mind about what it wanted to be done. At the 1942 Labour Party conference, for example, the two main speakers for the National Executive Committee, Harold Clay and Alice Bacon, both called for common schooling, the latter relating the demand particularly to the continuing separation of a minority of children in independent schools, yet the motion to which they were speaking called only for an "acceptance of the broad democratic principle that all children of school age shall be required by statute to attend schools provided or licensed by the state."[24] Attlee wanted the Green Book discussions widened to include the public school question, without indicating the lines of any policy.[25] G.D.H.Cole wanted the public schools to become the boarding element in the national educational system.[26]

Barbara Drake attempted to devise a scheme which would give effect to some of these aspirations, and Tawney supported it to the extent of

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23 E.g.P.R.O.Ed10/272,Report of Nuffield College Conference,27.6.42; H.C.Dent was reported as holding the view that, "The defects in our educational system were almost entirely due to the obstructive policy of the 7 per cent minority who refused to come into the common school system"

24 Labour Party,Report of the 41st Annual Conference,London,May 1942

25 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,17.9.41

26 Ibid.,Note by Butler,12.5.42

writing a sympathetic foreword, but the scheme showed both the lack of clarity in aims and the intrinsic difficulties of the problem. She advocated an increase in state scholarships to 50% of places initially, increasing eventually to 100%, when fees would be abolished. Pupils would have in many cases to be of grammar school standard, although she hoped that some schools "may prefer to develop from the start on multilateral lines."[27] Children on public assistance could be sent and could spend their holidays with their new friends "as a paying guest". One particular problem - the teaching of classics in existing secondary schools which was "notoriously... a weak spot" - could be solved, as could the smallness of some grammar school sixth forms, by sending pupils to the more famous public schools. This mixture of social idealism, high regard for the most ancient aspects of the public and grammar school curriculum, and the lack of understanding that taking the public schools on their own terms would undermine rather than foster progress in the state secondary school system, was typical of the confusion.

Cries for abolition of the public schools were few. There were imprecise plans for using schools locally where possible and adapting for vague national purposes those which could not be used. Often the favoured solution was a variant on the social widening of admissions. The Labour Party was therefore singularly vulnerable to the approach of Williams and Holmes.

Fleming's committee was acceptable to the Labour Party which did not, of course, know that it had had its origins in a desire to find ways of baling out those public schools which were living financially on a term-to-term basis with no capital reserves and considerable capital debts. When Butler received Cole and Laski in May 1942 the latter indicated to him that the Labour Party would be satisfied with an "earnest of our intention."[28] Butler did not then reveal the plans

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27 B.Drake, Education for Democracy, London 1941, pp.25-26. The aspects of this book which related to public schools were analysed at the Board; vide P.R.O.Ed136/216

28 P.R.O.Ed136/215, Note by Butler, 12.5.42

which he had already formulated for a committee on the topic. When the committee was appointed, two months later, it could be held that the Labour Party had received what Laski had said it wanted. If there were any doubts they would have been assuaged by the appointment of Clay and Cole to the committee.

A separate but related issue to which Labour spokesmen gave their attention at this time was that of the common school from 5 to 11 or 13. The term common school was occasionally used to describe multilateral and later comprehensive schools, but at this time it usually referred to the primary and preparatory stages of the state and private educational systems. Ede identified the clear distinction between private preparatory schools and independent secondary schools; the former were run as businesses for profit and could not therefore receive public grants by any method.[29] If the private sector of education were a problem which needed to be tackled, therefore, solutions being considered for the public schools were not applicable to preparatory schools. Ede regarded the notion of the common school as idealist[30] and not worthy of serious consideration by practical men. His objection to it was wholly and starkly on social grounds, which was all the more surprising in view of the abhorrence of social snobbery which he exhibited on other occasions.

As surprising as Ede's attitude was the approach of other policians and Holmes himself. The matter was considered at the Board after an approach to Butler early in 1942 by Sir Percy Harris, a Liberal M.P., who was chairman of the All-Party Panel on Education. He wanted all children to go to a similar school from 5 to 11 or 13 before branching out into different types of secondary schools. Shena Simon expressed a similar view. Butler's reaction was paradoxically both sympathetic and dismissive. Whilst remarking facetiously that he was "continually inspired by relics of the belief that we are a free country", he conceded

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29 P.R.O.Ed136/597,Ede to Butler,13.1.42
30 E.g.P.R.O.Ed136/125,Ede to Butler,9.9.41

that there was logically much to be said in favour of the common school and that he would not mind his own children going to one, "provided they have an opportunity of going to boarding school later and the preliminary education is good."[31] Holmes thought that only public inspection of private schools was required, but also considered that fewer parents would be able to afford preparatory schools after the war and that common schools would come in the future.[32]

Since a Liberal spokesman, a Conservative President of the Board, and the senior civil servant thought in these terms, the attitude of the Labour spokesman closest to the seat of power was surprising. "Logically, in an ideal world in which lice and skin troubles had been eliminated," he wrote, "the case for the common school would be unanswerable, but those unpleasant troubles - and others - exist... Have we the moral right to compel a parent to send his child from a clean and healthy home to a school which lousy, scabious children attend?"[33] Perhaps recognising that he had delivered a broadside which would be unexpected from his political corner, Ede went on to argue that they should wage war on poverty and strive for mutual respect between men in different walks of life. His outburst, however, effectively killed discussion now, and he expressed himself publicly in similar vein three months later. Mrs. Cazalet Keir asked whether "as a preliminary to post-war educational reforms" the Board would consider requiring all children up to the age of 11 to attend the same schools. As a minister Ede could not, of course, have agreed to the proposal, but he could have shown some sympathy if the notion were indeed "an ideal" as he had suggested. Instead he replied, "I fear it might be a first instalment on the road to a Fascist State." Thus the Conservative member for Islington East received her reply from the Parliamentary Secretary.[34]

Laski raised the matter again later in the year and regarded "the institution of something approaching the constitution of the common schools"

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31 P.R.O.Ed136/294,Note by Butler,23.1.42
32 Ibid.,Holmes to Butler,26.1.42
33 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,28.1.42
34 H.C.Debates,vol.379,col.317,16.4.42;the idea continued to be discussed, e.g. W.Kenneth Richmond,'A State Common School,What should the curriculum be?',Times Educational Supplement,25.7.42,p.361

as one of two matters about which Labour was keenest. By this term he seems to have meant the end of private preparatory schools and perhaps a common code for secondary education. His observation was not in line with the standard Labour demands (for the other chief concern, as stated by him, was the training of teachers) and in any case Butler turned aside the demand with a reminder that Ede had chaired the 1932 departmental committee on private education and with a claim that Ede had been "unsparing in his attempts to follow up the common school."[35]

The lack of clarity in the Labour Party's thinking on the questions of public schools and the common primary school was in contrast to its singularity of thought on the direct grant schools. The Party was at one in wanting all parental fees abolished in such schools. Ede expressed this view to Butler in September 1941.[36] The party's policy was confirmed at the annual conference in May 1942, when a National Executive Committee motion, calling for the abolition of fees in all grant-aided schools, including direct grant schools, was adopted.[37] Some Labour Party members favoured the abolition of the direct grant system itself, but on the question of the abolition of fees there was unanimity. It is this other aspect of the Fleming Committee's work which is the more important for this study.

The establishment of the Fleming Committee absolved Butler and the Board from the need to reach one of their more difficult decisions, at least for the moment. The committee's terms of reference were confusing, since public schools were defined as those in membership of the Governing Bodies' Association or the Headmasters' Conference. These included a high proportion of direct grant and aided schools. Indeed, even included were some maintained schools whose association with the general educational system could hardly be developed at all. Since the committee was also charged to consider the question of girls' public schools and defined those as schools in membership of the Governing

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35 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Note by Butler,12.5.42
36 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,9.9.41
37 Labour Party,Report of the 41st Annual Conference,London May 1942

Bodies of Girls' Schools Association, a further group of direct grant schools came within the committee's purview. The direct grant school question was quite different from that of the independent schools. It impinged much more directly on the future pattern of secondary education, since many of these institutions were selective schools serving local needs. If they were to retain their status, as schools independent of the local authority, recruiting some of the ablest children in the area and charging fees, many secondary school development plans would be prejudiced from the start. Whilst the question of the independent schools troubled a Labour Party which was well-versed in Tawney's sociological critique and was concerned at the existence of a privileged private sector of education nationally, the continuance of direct grant schools, catering in many cases for a solely local need and yet maintaining their independence of the local authority by means of fee income and grants from the Board, was a more direct threat to the aspiration of parity in secondary education and at the same time one where the solution looked much easier to achieve. 'Doing something' about the independent schools seemed difficult; abolishing the system of direct grant schools seemed relatively easy.

The attitude of Holmes and Williams in wishing to defend the direct grant system was as strong as that of the Labour Party in wishing to abolish it. The matter was considered fully by Norwood's committee before Fleming's was established. Williams stated his view unequivocally to Barrow, the secretary of the Norwood Committee, thus, "The one sheet anchor to cling on to is that at all costs the principle of a number of grammar schools retaining direct relations with the Board in the matter of grants should be preserved."[38] Barrow saw two reasons for keeping the direct grant. He was opposed to the demand for "plain, flat, humdrum

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38 P.R.O.Ed12/478, Williams to Barrow, 24.3.42

equalitarianism, that is levelling all down to the lowest plane", and he was not prepared to satisfy the "greed of directors" of education by handing the direct grant schools over to local authorities.[39] One problem for them was that the existing list of such schools included many anomalies and would have to be amended. There would then be a need to lay down new criteria for admission to the list and these might embrace some schools which were at that time maintained. Barrow was more interested in extending the direct grant list by transferring some maintained schools to it. He looked sympathetically at an idea floated by Norwood that schools could have direct grant status as "a reward" for having shown their efficiency and their ability to stand on their own feet without local authority guidance or support. That went too far for Williams who realised that local authorities would not countenance the notion of efficiency's being something which could not be achieved and maintained under their control. He was content to defend the status quo, recognising that this would be difficult enough, in view of the "universal and uncompromising opposition of L.E.A.s. and the N.U.T." Williams felt that, "The greatest adroitness is called for in this matter." His recommendation was to "let the details of the direct grant problems simmer while holding on tightly to the general principle."[40]

In spite of Williams' advice Barrow and Norwood pursued their notion of maintained schools' becoming direct grant if they could prove their ability to function efficiently, and Barrow produced a paper along these lines in May 1942 which Norwood approved.[41] One problem posed, but not resolved, in the paper was how they would react to an application from a non-grammar school for direct grant status. It seems to have been only a passing thought. At all other times the assumption was that they were talking about grammar schools. Barrow's scheme allowed for all schools, maintained as well as aided and existing direct grant schools, to apply for direct grant status if they could show that they could be financially viable when in receipt of grant, that they were efficient and could claim some individuality or special role, and that they had

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39 Ibid.,Barrow to Williams,23.3.42
40 Ibid.,Williams to Barrow,24.3.42
41 Ibid.,Barrow to Williams,11.5.42,enclosing Direct Grant Schools,B.

stable and active governing bodies which included local authority representatives. Local authorities could object to the "loss" of a school, but not on principle; only if they could prove "discrimination" against their own schools and no resultant advantage to the area would their objections prevail.

Williams would have none of this dangerous imprecision which could provoke still greater opposition to the very notion of schools linked directly to the Board. His alternative was a much simpler defence of the main principle.[42] He was willing to allow only aided schools, in addition to existing direct grant schools, to apply for direct grant status, and wished to limit any new applications to non-local schools. He also accepted that direct grant schools should "conform in all respects to the general policy as regards fees in other secondary schools", i.e. if fees were abolished in all other grammar schools, maintained and aided, that would have to be accepted for direct grant schools as well. In his scheme local authorities would have the right to appoint one third of governors and to determine the number of places which they "may reasonably require". The Board would then meet all the school's costs, except for L.E.A. contributions for children whom it sent (and these were not to exceed the cost of places in its own schools) and any contribution which the L.E.A. cared to make at its own discretion towards capital expenditure. He accepted Barrow's criteria for the award of direct grant status. For Williams, therefore, the direct grant school was to be defended as a selective, perhaps highly-selective institution, serving a local need as perhaps the only but certainly the best grammar school in the area. A direct grant from the Board was to give some grammar schools a measure of independence from local authorities and a status which would set them apart from all other secondary schools.

It was Williams' view which prevailed and his paper, not Barrow's which was presented to a meeting of the committee in June 1942.[43] Even

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42 Ibid.,Williams to Barrow,26.5.42,enclosing Direct Grant Schools, a note by Williams,15.5.42

43 P.R.O.Ed12/479,Norwood Minutes4,12-13.6.42;and COM18,which is Williams' paper as above

this paper did not produce agreement, and it was accepted that either a compromise would have to be reached or a statement made that the committee could not agree, At the next meeting later in the same month, Norwood referred to the "acute feeling on both sides" and called for compromise.[44]

By now discussion of the wider public school issue had been removed from Norwood's consideration by the decision to appoint Fleming's committee. Norwood had received the news in early June and had, according to Barrow, taken it quite well, realising, as he had put it, that "we have been headed off the topic."[45] Fleming's committee was officially appointed in July. It is strange that Williams and Barrow did not immediately accept that the direct grant question was also more appropriate to Fleming's terms of reference than to Norwood's. There were well over a hundred direct grant and aided schools which came within Fleming's terms of reference.[46] Instead of dropping the matter, the officials exerted themselves at this very time to secure the inclusion of a statement favourable to the direct grant principle in the Norwood Report.

The greatest obstacle for them to overcome was the attitude of the local authorities, which were at one with both the N.U.T. and the A.M.A. in being "strongly" in favour of the direct grant schools being converted into aided schools.[47] Williams' and Barrow's manipulation of the committee is clearly illustrated by their work on the conversion of local authority representatives. Norwood arranged two private meetings with Sir Percival Sharp, secretary of the Association of Education Committees. In expressing to Barrow his pleasure at this news, Williams assumed that Norwood's "main object will be to secure his agreement on direct grant schools and the university scheme."[48] Norwood was successful

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44 Ibid.,Norwood Minutes5,26-27.6.42

45 P.R.O.Ed.12/478,Barrow to Williams,11.5.42

46 Board of Education,The Public Schools and the General Educational System,London 1944,referred to hereafter as Fleming Report,pp. 124-128 lists the schools in three categories:
65 direct grant and aided schools in membership of the Governing Bodies Association
99 direct grant,aided and maintained schools in membership of the Headmasters' Conference
58 direct grant schools in membership of the Governing Body of Girls' Schools Association
The 65 schools in the first category are all included in the second category, so that the total of boys' schools is 99, but the second category includes some maintained schools

47 P.R.O.Ed.12/478,Williams to Barrow,17.3.42;N.U.T. Report on Proposals by the Executive, adopted by Conference,Cheltenham 1942;London Institute of Education,A.M.A.Records,Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1.11.41

48 Ibid.,Williams to Barrow,14.5.42

and was able to report to Williams that Sharp had accepted the continuation of the schools on the lines of his [Williams'] paper.[49] Notwithstanding this success, when Barrow wrote to Williams a fortnight later to give him a break-down of voting intentions within the committee,his news was bad. Certainly three members would be against them, and four others would probably be so. Only four could be regarded as certainly in favour of them.[50] Barrow arranged for Sharp to attempt to convert another local authority representative, Dr. P.D. Innes, Birmingham's chief education officer.[51] But by now Williams, whilst still holding out hopes that his paper might be endorsed, accepted that what he had hoped for was not now possible. "We cannot come out with a strong recommendation in favour of them," he wrote.[52] His irritation with the members who opposed him on this topic was revealing. He was outraged that "people like Shurrock should express decisive views of the recognition or otherwise of direct grant schools." His objection was presumably that Shurrock's membership of the committee was due to his office as secretary of London University's Matriculation and Schools' Examinations Council. He had no such objection to Dr. J.E. Myers' views, which were the same as his own, even though Myers was on the committee as principal of a college of technology and formerly a chairman of the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board - qualifications which did not per se entitle him to talk with more authority on the topic of direct grant schools than did Shurrock's. The fact was that Williams had been trying to obtain from the committee a statement on a topic which was not really within its terms of reference. Whereas he was to succeed in a similar objective in relation to the tri-partite division of secondary schooling,[53] he realised that on the direct grant school question he could not succeed. He therefore advised Barrow to concentrate the committee's attention narrowly on examinations and the curriculum. If he could not have the favourable reference to direct grant schools which he wanted, he would have none at all.

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49 Ibid.,Norwood to Williams,6.6.42
50 Ibid.,Barrow to Williams,18.6.42
51 Ibid.,Barrow to Williams,22.6.42
52 Ibid.,Williams to Barrow,22.6.42
53 Supra,pp.122-123

The role of Chuter Ede in the debates on the public and direct grant school questions was not without its ambiguities. He was closer than anybody else in the Labour Party to the work of Holmes, Williams and Butler, even if he was not privy to all that went on. It is not clear whether he appreciated the extent to which a consideration of the public schools' place in the educational system had originated with anxiety for their survival. The claim that the Green Book was concerned solely with state education and that it could not therefore include a consideration of this topic was acceptable to him and he was therefore willing to see the problem tackled outside the context of impending legislation.[54] He was also concerned about the "acrimonious debate" on the subject, and seemed to regard it as having the same potential for dividing the nation as had the dual system controversy, and thought it better kept separate from the main issues of the state system.[55]

In his attitude to the question itself he showed his party's general feeling that something should be done and its vagueness about what could be done. He referred to Britain's "class-ridden society" and argued that "something more than reform of the public schools is necessary."[56] But, unlike some Labour spokesmen, he did not take the view that the ability to purchase education was intrinsically wrong and a privilege incompatible with the greater social equality which it was common-place to advocate at that time. He put his view very bluntly to Mrs.M.A. Hamilton, a former Labour M.P., whose thoughts on the matter had reached him through Greenwood's office, making it clear that he had no objections to people buying better education.[57] Indeed, as we have seen,[58] he felt that the parents of preparatory school children had the right to expect an improvement in working class hygiene before they could be expected to accept compulsory association in school between their children and those from Council schools. Later, when speaking in the Commons on the White Paper, he compared the notion of a state monopolty in education to the Nazis' use of schools.[59] In an interview with H.C.Dent editor of The

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54 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,6.8.41 and 10.9.41
55 Ibid.,Note to Butler,unsigned but by Ede,10.9.41
56 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,9.9.41
57 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,6.8.41;B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.1,5.8.41
58 Supra.p.158
59 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.2035,30.7.43

Times Educational Supplement, he exalted this view to a principle involving fundamental liberties, saying that he was "definitely opposed to a state monopoly in education" which he regarded as "tyrannical and dangerous."[60]

His views on what should be done, whilst no clearer than the rest of his party's, included a rejection of local solutions as advocated by Tawney.[61] When Tawney put this opinion to Butler, Ede quickly opposed it on the grounds that the geographical distribution of the schools precluded their use in local authority schemes. He was, however, in agreement with Tawney that a small number of free places in public schools was not an acceptable solution.[62] Apart from wanting a national rather than a local solution, Ede was clearer about what he opposed than what he favoured.

He attempted to clarify his views in January 1942 when he drafted two papers which were reactions to a note by Fisher, Bishop of London and spokesman for the Governing Bodies Association, a letter from Leeson and a paper from the Headmasters' Conference.[63] Although he was at pains to be "emphatic on those points on which I feel certain Labour Party opinion will be inflexible", his papers are not entirely helpful in explaining his position because of their nature - a response to the views of others rather than a straightforward exposition of his own views - and he did not himself make proposals, having been assured by Butler that "no government policy is being formulated."

Ede was hostile to the claims that public schools enjoyed greater freedom and variety - both curricular and administrative - than maintained schools. "In the post war world in which democracy will be triumphant", he wrote, "are head teachers of secondary schools alone to be withdrawn from its beneficent influence?" He was also insistent on the constitutional point that any institution in receipt of public monies, however received, must accept a degree of accountability to

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60 P.R.O.Ed136/215, Ede to Butler, 8.5.42

61 Ibid., Note by Butler on conversation with Tawney, 5.9.41

62 Ibid., Ede to Butler, 9.9.41; B.L. Ede Diary, vol.1, 8.9.41

63 P.R.O.Ed136/597, Ede to Butler, 9.1.42 and 13.1.42. The digest of his views which follows is taken from both papers.

Parliament which had voted the assistance. This might include a requirement of Parliament that all entrants - those privately-financed as well as those financed by the state - should reach minimum entrance standards, i.e. that the public schools should replace social selection with academic selection.

For Ede it was the boarding aspect of many public schools which was their distinctive feature. In countenancing an extension of public school education he thought entirely in social terms, i.e. providing boarding education in public schools for those children who needed it but did not receive it in the state system. In view of the falling birthrate he considered that this need could be met in existing public schools without the provision of additional places. Apparently aware that the public schools were 'cap in hand', he expected them to sacrifice some principles in return for the state cash which they were seeking.

His most important and most forcefully expressed view was that all fees should be abolished in direct grant schools. He acknowledged that the authors of the Green Book had changed their opinion and now shared his views. We have seen how Williams' views had been modified.[64] In Ede's view the public school lobby needed to understand that this change had taken place. The assumption that the direct grant itself would continue was tacitly accepted by him.

Thus Ede was emotionally hostile to the public schools and sceptical about the advantages which they claimed. He doubted whether boarding - their distinctive feature - was necessary in many cases, and though he saw the possibility of a link between them and the state system by their providing boarding education for those who really needed it but could not have it, he expected a measure of public control to accompany any financial contributions by the state. Most importantly he believed that local direct grant schools should conform to the general pattern of

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64 Supra, p. 162

secondary education and not charge fees. At no stage does he seem to have argued for the abolition of the direct grant system and he seems to have been content that such schools should continue to be highly selective academically.

The main area of controversy had thus narrowed to that of the role to be played by direct grant schools in local schemes of secondary school re-organisation. On the one hand it was argued that, if direct grant schools were to charge fees, they could not be fully involved in the local provision of secondary education. This was the view which now prevailed at the Board. Ede had always held it. Williams - the most knowledgeable and influential official in the sphere of secondary education - had come to hold it partly as a position which could be defended (the vital question being that of the direct grant itself), and partly because it accorded with his long-held opinion that grammar schools needed to be made academically more selective and socially less so. On the other hand there were those, including the public school lobbyists themselves, who believed that fees were an essential element in the independence from the local authority which they considered to be the justification for and distinctive advantage of that type of school.

Butler's position on this matter was more difficult than on any other, for it was the principal issue on which there was a clear-cut division of opinion between the Board and a section of his own party. Many local authority members of his party took the view that the local direct grant schools should become L.E.A.schools, but some M.Ps. and ministers held the view that liberty and parental rights were involved. His own opinions vacillated but eventually fell in line with those of the Board. In October 1942, in response to a note from Holmes which had outlined the essential contents of a bill, he wrote, "I should prefer, as at present advised, not to abolish the fees in direct grant schools, as

distinct from other forms of secondary schools."[65] Ede responded quickly to this news. He urged Butler to make a distinction between local and non-local schools, and said that there was no case for keeping fees in the former.[66] In February 1943 Butler wrote to Lord Fleming and asked to have his committee's views on the question of fees in grant-aided schools as a matter of urgency. On 2 April Fleming responded with an interim report.[67] The committee was divided, but a clear majority favoured the abolition of fees in direct grant schools; the voting was eleven to seven. Their reason was that the schools could fulfil the role of the highly-selective grammar school in each area. Local direct grant schools should become L.E.A. schools. Only if all local secondary school places were free could the projected transfer of wrongly-placed pupils take place at the age of 13. The direct grant list should be reconstituted for non-local schools, and although governing bodies should include L.E.A. representatives, it was the governing bodies of these schools and not the L.E.As. which should set selection tests for admission. The L.E.A. would then pay in full for these places, amd the remaining places would be subsidised by a grant from the Board. They accepted that the abolition of fees would not be justified in a few schools and that these might have to become independent.[68]

The Special Fleming Report thus supported the views currently held at the Board. It accepted the principle of segregated secondary education. The motive for the abolition of fees was the desire that the direct grant schools should continue to perform their role as selective grammar schools in a system which would now be free. Butler was persuaded. Two days before he officially received the report he informed Holmes that he wished to accept the majority view and he suggested that the abolition of fees be included in the draft bill. He foresaw problems, however, and doubted whether he would succeed in winning the

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65 P.R.O.Ed136/379,Butler to Holmes,20.10.42
66 Ibid.,Ede to Butler,22.10.42
67 Board of Education,Abolition of Tuition Fees in Grant-Aided Secondary Schools,London 1943,referred to hereafter as Special Fleming Report
68 Ibid.,pp.12-17 and p.19

support of some ministers in cabinet.[69] He did not publish the report, which was endorsed, "For official use only."

Support for the unpublished views of the majority report came from all quarters. A County Councils' Association deputation favoured the abolition of fees in all grant-aided schools, including those direct grant schools which formed an essential part of local provision. When one of the deputation expressed forcefully his personal opinion, which was contrary to C.C.A. policy, that the abolition of fees was "a direct attack on the freedom of parents," Butler specifically rejected that view.[70] The Association of Education Committees expressed its concern to Butler about the continuing vagueness over direct grant schools and he acknowledged the basis for their concern, citing Coventry as an example of the places where almost all existing secondary provision was in direct grant schools.[71] Curiously Ede was unenthusiastic about the report which supported his party's goal, recording that he was "not moved by the majority or minority."[72]

The position by the Summer of 1943 was thus that there was a very strong movement in favour of the abolition of fees in local direct grant schools which were to become part of the normal L.E.A. secondary school system. Teacher and local authority organisations were agreed; a majority of the committee which he had set up concurred. Butler too was converted but, conscious of division within his own party and especially of opposition from Conservative M.Ps. and ministers, he did not publish the Fleming recommendations. Instead he sent a note to Holmes in which he indicated his dilemma and the rationale of his way forward. He almost apologised to Holmes when he wrote, "you should realise that I do not regard this only as a political problem - though it has that aspect. I am anxious not to lose tradition in education, and have realised that I shall have to have an answer to the Fleming Committee. Moreover, I don't want all schools gleichgestaltet. I

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69 P.R.O.Ed136/389,Butler to Holmes,31.3.43
70 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Note of deputation from C.C.A.,14.3.43
71 Ibid.,Note of deputation from A.E.C.,11.8.43
72 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,26.4.43

prefer a shading off. Otherwise you'll have the social problem left isolated and more clearly defined at the 'rich' end."[73] Publicly Butler gave hints that were comforting to the schools in question. Speaking at Felsted School, one of the independent schools included in Fleming's enquiry, he said, "Our system has grown up by stages; sometimes in a haphazard way, but it is none the worse for that. In some ways we are bound to overhaul this system, to make it more complete and more orderly. But we do not want all our schools to be uniform in type or control. On the contrary, we want schools to fit the needs of all kinds of boys and girls, with a wide variety of schools of different grades and types."[74] Reform there had to be, but there was a good prospect that it would be kept to a minimum, and the virtues of variety were now coming more to the fore at the expense of the ideal of parity.

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73 P.R.O.Ed136/389,Butler to Holmes,16.5.43
74 Reported in Times,3.7.43,p.2

Chapter 8:LABOUR'S DEPUTATION TO THE BOARD

Although Labour's views had been made known to Butler and the Board in various ways whilst policy on multilateralism, the leaving age and the direct grant schools was under discussion, it was not until 25 February 1943 that a deputation from the Labour Party went to the Board. The meeting was one of the last on the Green Book. The tardiness of the Labour Party's deputation was well-illustrated by the fact that it took place on the same day that Ede, unbeknown to his fellow party members, completed his re-draft of the important clause which dealt with the organisation of secondary schooling.

Whilst the deputation was too late significantly to influence the Board's thinking, there seems to have been no doubts about its importance at the Board, for officials prepared well for it. They had had a copy of the Labour Party's paper and they prepared a very detailed brief for Butler's use, including some political observations, so that he could explain why some of the party's proposals were not in accord with the projected legislation. The officials were again defending a line of action which had already been determined. The discussion was to be far from open.

Butler was accompanied by Ede, Deputy Secretary Wood, the former adversaries Williams and Cleary from the principal assistant secretaries' committee, and Heaton, the private secretary brought in by Butler to help him on the Bill, amongst others. The Labour deputation was headed by Harold Clay and included Alice Bacon, Cove, Spikes, Shearman, Franklin and Barbara Drake, as well as Laski and others. We are fortunate to have both the Board's[1] and the Labour Party's[2] minutes of the discussion.

Clay began by stressing the need for early legislation. Butler was re-assuring to the point of boastfulness. He excused the delay to date by referring to the lack of preparation which he had found when he came to the Board, an observation which may have been true in terms of

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1 P.R.O.Ed136/266 contains the Labour Party's paper,the officials' brief to Butler and the Board's memorandum of the interview.
2 T.H.,Labour Party Records,R.D.R.197/March 1943 is the Labour Party's record of the meeting.

drafting a Bill but which ignored the fact that his officials' Green Book pre-dated his appointment and was not going to be much altered as a result of it. The Bill was now being drafted, which was "more than could be said of the other measures of social reform," and he was hopeful that he would be able to present his Bill, "as early as possible this year."

At the head of the Labour Party's list of proposals was the raising of the leaving age to 15 at the end of the war and to 16 within three years by an appointed day to be specified in the Bill. The inclusion of the appointed day was of "vital importance" and an "imperative necessity." All of the arguments were rehearsed but Clay stressed the unusual degree of unanimity amongst educational spokesman on this matter, and its relationship to the achievement of parity in secondary schooling about the desirability of which there was also widespread agreement. As it was put starkly by Shearman, "A school with a leaving age of less than 16 would not be a secondary school." Clay in fact gave Butler a warning that this was a minimum demand by stating that, "Unless it was possible to make provision for the raising of the school leaving age to 16 by a definite date there was no possibility of the President's reaching agreement with the deputation or with the Party in the House."

Butler in reply did not follow his officials' brief. His approach was much blander, his manner more conciliatory. The officials had suggested that he should reveal the Board's intentions to include only the raising of the age to 15 as soon as possible after the war "with, perhaps, provision for it to be raised to 16 when circumstances permit." They suggested that he should rehearse the practical difficulties, argue that there was no unanimity of opinion on the matter, and even try to exploit what they perceived to be the admission of a higher priority for the establishment of day continuation colleges in a Nuffield College report of which Clay was a signatory.[3] The forthrightness of Clay's

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3 Nuffield College, Industry and Education, London 1943; vide p.145, footnote 35

statement, the particular arguments which he and others had developed, and the short shrift which he gave to Butler's attempt to exploit the Nuffield College report made the forthright approach unpromising in any case, but Butler, the experienced negotiator, was wise enough to contrive that the deputation should leave in the belief that he was sympathetic if not committed to its view. He argued that the main problem over the party's timescale was the slow pace of Hadow re-organisation and that the educational case for requiring pupils to remain to 16 in all-age schools was weak. He invited the deputation to consider whether it could approve a scheme for raising the leaving age to 16 in those areas where it was practicable, whilst keeping it at 15 elsewhere. This idea was rejected at once. Ede also invited them to consider a five-year difference between raising the age to 15 and to 16.

There seems to have been some misunderstanding on the strength of Butler's feelings, or perhaps the nuances were such that one or both sides had difficulty in finding the right words, for whilst the Board recorded that Butler regarded raising the leaving age to 16 as "desirable", the Labour Party recorded that, "on educational grounds, he believed that 16 was essential." On the merits of the case, whichever record be the more accurate, the deputation could feel that Butler was at one with them. Rather more important was the fact that the Board's officials did not wish to raise the leaving age to 16.

The point of difference between the Labour Party and Butler in the sphere of secondary school organization was the view to be taken of multilateral schools. The Labour Party's paper which had been sent to the Board in advance accepted tripartism and asked for a common code for all post-11 schooling "in whatever type of school it is conducted." It also asked for common standards of staffing and accommodation. The officials' brief to Butler noted that these demands had been accepted by

the Board. On multilateral schools, however, there was a difference of opinion. The officials had no objections to "experiments in suitable cases," but cited the inadequacy of existing buildings, the problems of too great a size, the smallness of sites especially in cities, and the inability of headmasters to cope with the whole range of abilities as obstacles to the "general policy" for which the Labour Party was calling. Clay put the party's case for such schools in his opening contribution, but it was Alice Bacon who again took up the point most vigorously, emphasizing that 11+ selection was premature and that 13+ transfers were difficult. Butler again portrayed the Board as being at one with the deputation, instancing Alice Bacon's remarks about the difficulties of 13+ transfers as evidence of the identity between their views. Mentioning his recent visit to Scotland he expressed his admiration for the Glasgow senior secondary schools, regretting only that they were too large, and commented that, "they did go a long way towards removing snob trouble." He assured them that, "he would certainly encourage experiments in this country." A reference to the Norwood Committee, whose report he was expecting in the summer, was enough to leave the question of secondary school reorganisation open. A reference to the Fleming Committee, whose report he was expecting "shortly", was sufficient to avoid discussion of the direct grant and public school issues.

From both the Board's account and the Labour Party's it is clear that the Board's mailed fist was in a very soft velvet glove indeed. The Board's officials had no desire to raise the leaving age to 16, yet Butler gave the impression that he wished to see it so raised. They were committed to a nationally-directed institutionalisation of the ad hoc tripartism in secondary education which had followed Hadow, yet Butler gave the impression that North of the border he had seen an

alternative, had been impressed by it and was sympathetic to a start being made in England. On other matters the appointment of committees, to give the impression that authoritative and independent advice from outside the Board would sway decisions, allowed Butler to avoid discussion.

The question of whether Butler was a dissembler or the creature of his ministry has to be considered. Was it the performance of a man who was having to spend many hours softening the edges of sectarian controversies (and who had had similar experience in India earlier in his career) and had transferred this bland approach to the key educational issues which had to be resolved in time for the publication of his Bill, or did he really have an open mind on these issues and believe that he had reopened his officials' minds? The evidence tends to support the former analysis.

The consensus approach to politics is disarming. If issues can be expressed in such a way that everybody seems to agree on aims, but differ only on means or perhaps only on the apparently even less important matter of timing, controversy is avoided. The disagreement on raising the school leaving age to 16 was at this time, and was to remain in the parliamentary debates, about the apparently subsidiary issue of whether an appointed day for it was to be included in the Act. There was no public debate of consequence on its merits. It was accepted by all but the Board's officials as desirable. It was acknowledged that talk of common standards was meaningless without a common date to end basic courses. It was further acknowledged that talk of transfers at 13+, admittedly difficult to arrange in any case, would be made even less likely to happen if a two year course in one school were to be followed by perhaps less than a two year course in another. Yet the position of the Board's officials at the time of the Green Book and now at the time of the Labour deputation was that no case for raising the leaving age to 16 had been made. The official position was hostile to the proposal,

yet Butler gave the impression that he favoured it and saw only practical problems.

The Labour Party deputation could come away feeling that there was little disagreement about the contents of a bill, that their aspirations were shared by the President and his ministry, and that little more needed to be done by them to influence policy. Events were to reveal that the reality was somewhat different.

Chapter 9: THE WHITE PAPER

The deliberations and negotiations which had been taking place since the issue of the Green Book in 1941 bore fruit with the presentation to Parliament of the White Paper, Educational Reconstruction on 16 July 1943.[1] Butler prepared his ground well, taking care to ensure the acquiescence of Churchill, the enthusiastic response of educational reformers and a favourable press reception.

As we have seen[2] the Prime Minister had initially rejected any thought of legislation on education and Butler had had to tread warily as he continued his negotiations, especially those with the churches about the voluntary schools. In October 1942 he wrote to the Government Chief Whip and suggested that there should be a reference to educational reform in the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament.[3] At the same time he wrote to Sir John Anderson, by then Lord President of the Council, to seek advice on a timetable for legislation. Outlining the prospects for a religious settlement agreed by all the churches, he had to omit any mention of the Roman Catholics who were still hoping for 100% grants, but he expected agreement and observed that, "If...this ancient stumbling block is circumvented, the case for a major advance on the educational front will be strongly pressed."[4]

Churchill's recollections of change in education were mainly about the church school controversy of 1902 and, when Butler talked to him about an agreed syllabus for religious instruction in local authority schools, he called it the "County Council Creed" and asked Butler if he were founding a new state religion.[5] Of great help to Butler was Churchill's ignorance of the educational system, especially the state system, and his lack of interest in it. If these had not worked in the interests of progress - as they ultimately did, for Churchill's indifference was not churlish and he did not stand in the way of changes

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1 Board of Education, Educational Reconstruction, Cmnd 6458, presented to Parliament 16.7.43; referred to hereafter as White Paper
2 Supra p. 93
3 P.R.O. Ed136/377, Butler to James, 16.10.42
4 Ibid., Butler to Anderson, 19.10.42
5 R.A. Butler, Art of the Possible, London, 1971, p.99

which did not interest him - it would have been irksome for any minister planning school reforms to have had to listen to his comments. These included a quotation from Campbell-Bannerman in 1906 to the effect that the President's job was about "smacking children's bottoms and blowing their noses", the observation that Butler's job was to provide "powder monkeys" to relieve pressure on the gun sites, and, as part of Churchill's congratulations on the Board's plans, his view that the most important task was to maintain the population level.[6] Even at the time when he was discussing the main lines of legislation, Churchill passed over most points without comment and then tried to promote nursery education for two year olds on the basis of Mrs.Churchill's having read a book, Our Towns, which revealed "the disgusting habits of certain children and their families." He quoted a foreigner who had said that the common people of Britain were more common than those of other countries, and he was anxious about housewives "whose charm faded with each succeeding child."[7] At a meeting of the War Cabinet on 13 July, when the decision was being reached to present the White Paper three days later, Churchill asked Butler an irrelevant question about the use of instructional films in schools.[8]

The only result of Butler's efforts by the Autumn of 1942 was a reference in the King's Speech to the fact that conversations on changes in education were proceeding. Although the reference was quite prominent, in that it was separated from other references to domestic progress and was awarded its own paragraph, it emphasized the consensus approach to reform. The Government's hopes were that "these discussions will result in such a wide measure of agreement being reached that further progress can be made with plans for the better education of My people."[9] According to Butler's later recollections, even this was a concession which had to be won,

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6 Ibid.,pp.108-109
7 P.R.O.Ed136/392,Confidential,Butler to Ede and Holmes
8 P.R.O.Ed136/405,Minutes of War Cabinet,13.7.43
9 H.C.Debates,vol.385,cols.7-8,11.11.42

and the omission of a reference to legislation was deliberate.[10]

In March 1943 Butler was invited, with Churchill's confidant Lord Cherwell, to stay overnight at Chequers. The Prime Minister was planning a broadcast on home affairs which would promise a general election as soon as Hitler was defeated and the opportunity for voters to give their verdict on a four-year plan for post-war reconstruction. Churchill was clearly already giving thought to the means of retaining power after the war. He had not become Prime Minister as a result of winning an election and perhaps saw that being the war leader was not a guarantee of post-war electoral popularity. Butler's visit was intended to give Churchill the opportunity to rehearse the section of his speech about education. In Churchill's draft this was largely high-flown generalisation ranging from Disraeli's views to a hint that the old school tie should be abandoned in favour of a meritocracy. One problem for Butler was that it also included a statement that the leaving age must be raised to 16. His daughter Mary had been the author of this assertion, claiming that a leaving age of 16 had been promised and that the promise should be kept. Churchill's own thought was that there was a need to keep 15-year olds off the labour market.[11] Butler tactfully suggested that he might scrutinize the wording of the speech. Initially rebuffed by Churchill, who did not want him "messing about" with the text, he was then given the entire speech. Cherwell pursued Butler to his room and insisted on his locking the draft securely away. They then joined Churchill in the cinema and, equipped in the front row with armchairs, gout stools and cigars, whilst locally-based soldiers made up the rest of the audience and A.T.S.girls did the waiting, they watched a film about a nineteenth-century Tsar who acquired radical ideas from his French-trained wife

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10 R.A.Butler,op.cit.,p.109

11 Holmes also expressed this view,supra p.146, but it is an opinion at odds with the general expectation of a labour shortage after the war.Curiously a shortage of building labour was often cited by Holmes as one of the reasons why the raising of the leaving age could not be carried out soon after the end of the war.

and was murdered for his pains. As they left, Cherwell whispered something to Churchill, who rounded on Butler and demanded, "Give me my speech." When Butler fetched it, Churchill tore out and handed back the four pages on education and Butler returned to his room to begin at 1 a.m. the rewriting of the section.

The effect of his work was to make the commitment to raising the leaving age vague - it was to be "progressively prolonged", to add references to continued part-time education, and to soften the "rather rude remarks" about the old school tie. These changes, which could be regarded as only textual, ensured that the Prime Minister's wishes, which in truth had been formulated without much thought, were subordinated to those of the Board. The next morning Butler was surprised to learn that Churchill might not want to see him. However at mid-morning he was summoned. Churchill was very rude to him, saying amongst other things that his cat, by keeping him warm, was doing more for the war effort than was Butler, but he accepted without discussion all of Butler's amendments.[12]

The hand of Butler was evident when the speech was broadcast. Equality of initial opportunity was coupled with differentiated schooling thus, "Human beings are endowed with infinitely varying qualities and dispositions, and each one is different from the others. We cannot make them all the same...It is in our power, however, to secure equal opportunities for all." Religious toleration was coupled with the continuance of religious instruction in schools, for the latter was a "rock" and a "fundamental element" which should not be abandoned. The leaving age was to be "progressively prolonged" (for the President was in the event more influential than the Prime Minister's daughter) and was coupled with "part-time release from industry."[13] Although time-consuming, Butler's visit to Chequers was time well spent in the Board's interests and, after the broadcast, he appropriately wrote a note of appreciation to Churchill.[14]

The following month Butler again went to see Churchill and, on

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12 R.A.Butler, op.cit., pp.109-116

13 Broadcast by Churchill on 21.3.43. Published in C.Eade(editor), The War Speeches of the Rt.Hon.Winston S.Churchill (5 vols.), vol.2, London 1952, p.433

14 P.R.O.Ed136/377, Butler to Churchill, 23.3.43

the advice of Anderson, was accompanied by him as well as by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood, and the Chief Whip. Churchill commented on the abolition of fees in secondary schools and on the religious question. He was willing to accept Butler's settlement of the latter issue, but said that the minister "must go bail for the Concordat",warning him that, if there were trouble, there would be no bill. The continuing demands of the Roman Catholics were brushed aside. In Churchill's view they were doing very well already; it was a question of "Rome on the rates". Both the Lord President and the Chancellor defended the settlement and said that, without it, the progress already made on educational reform would be lost. The agreed aim after the meeting was for Butler to present a draft bill to the Lord President's Committee as soon as possible, and for a debate to be held on first or second reading in the summer, preferably in June or early July.[15] Butler therefore required increased pressure on Ram, the parliamentary draftsman. Ram was not optimistic that he could comply with the new timetable. That was one problem. Another was the pre-occupation of the Lord President's Committee itself with work on pensions.

Butler referred to both of these problems in papers to the Lord President's Committee. Later in April he asked that an "explanatory paper" should be published and a general debate on a bill should be held before the summer recess.[16] He was worried lest the ground won over the religious question might be lost, and he thought that the government should forestall this by making its intentions known. The lay authorities were accepting the religious settlement only as a pre-requisite for educational reform, and would not tolerate it in isolation. In a paper in June he submitted a printed draft of the Bill, but reported that it was not yet complete. He also submitted a draft White Paper,

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15 P.R.O.Ed136/392,Butler to Holmes,16.4.43;a much fuller account is given in a confidential note of the same date to Ede and Holmes

16 P.R.O.Cab71/12,L.P.(43)89,Memorandum by President of the Board of Education,27.4.43

which distinguished between those measures which required legislation and those which could be affected by administrative action alone. If the Bill could not be introduced until the next session, he wanted a debate on the White Paper before the summer recess. Again he referred to the "general expectation" that the government's intentions were to be published soon and expressed his apprehension that, if this were not done, he might not be able to maintain the consensus reached.[17] In a note to Anderson he referred to the dangers of rumours and impatience.[18]

Besides the difficulties of the parliamentary draftsman and the pre-occupation of the Lord President's Committee with another reform, there was a third obstacle to progress, viz. the need to conclude detailed arrangements with the Ministries of Labour and Health and with the Home Office.[19] Butler himself added to these problems by wanting at a late stage to include a change in the Board's title, a definition of the new Minister's responsibilities and a revised constitution for the consultative committee.[20] At the same time he was insisting that the inclusion of any point in the Bill should be determined by "whether it can go in without raising trails and amendments which will delay." In spite of his own demands on his officials, everything now argued for the greatest possible speed. The main lines of the religious settlement were agreed and, although the Roman Catholics were divided and might still cause difficulty, Butler could decide to keep his head down in the hope that the ship would not founder and that there might be fair weather ahead. If the church school question argued for speed, speed in turn argued against any further change in the purely educational aspects of the reforms. Sir Frederick Mander had made the point emphatically at the N.U.T.Conference in April. Ede reported his warning to Butler thus, "The prospects for the Bill were about to enter

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17 P.R.O.Cab71/13,LP(43)147,Educational Reconstruction.Memorandum by the President of the Board of Education, with draft Bill and draft White Paper,24.6.43

18 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Butler to Anderson,24.6.43

19 Ibid.,Butler to Holmes,20.10.42 and 3.2.43

20 Ibid.,Butler to Holmes,3.2.43

a delicate political phase. You and I [i.e.Butler and Ede] had to be constant to our line. We could give nothing more either to the right or left. If we did, we should be lost."[21] Landfall was imminent, nobody should rock the boat.

Nonetheless, by early July 1943 there was still uncertainty about the extent of parliamentary discussion which could be allowed. On 5 July Ede was called to a conference with Butler, who asked whether he would agree to the publication of a White Paper now and a delay until the Autumn of a debate in Parliament. Ede was reluctant to accept this arrangement, arguing that in the interval between publication and debate objectors would be vociferous and supporters silent. Ministers would have no means of steadying a worsening situation.[22] The next day Butler and Ede went to the Lord President's Committee. Ede felt that Morrison was trying to delay publication, although he divined no reason for this. Bevin seized the opportunity to emphasize the importance of raising the leaving age, arguing that until the length of school life was settled no steps in post-war reconstruction could be undertaken.[23] In spite of these difficulties it was agreed to recommend to the War Cabinet that the White Paper be published, debated if possible, and legislated upon in the next session.[24] On 7 July the White Paper was sent to the Stationery Office for printing in paper proof form.[25]

The next day its main proposals were revealed in most newspapers, an event which caused Butler a little embarrassment in the House. Lindsay had already given notice of his intention to ask about the date of the expected White Paper's appearance; his question was but the latest of several on the matter in June and July. Butler had stonewalled. SHinwell then seized the opportunity to ask whether the press accounts were accurate. Butler still stonewalled. Another M.P. suggested that the leak had been a deliberate public relations exercise.

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21 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Ede to Butler,28.4.43
22 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,5.7.43
23 Ibid.,6.7.43
24 P.R.O.,Ed136/403,Conclusions of a Meeting of the Lord President's Committee,6.7.43
25 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,7.7.43

Butler ignored the remark and the House passed on to other matters.[26]

On the same day as the press leak Ede had a talk with Bevin at the House. The Minister of Labour urged Ede to go "full steam ahead" with the plans, arguing that the fixing of the school age was crucial and the decision on which everything else depended. In Bevin's view Churchill was the greatest obstacle. "He wants to have nothing done on any subject," Bevin complained, "but we must overcome that."[27]

On 13 July Butler went to a meeting of the War Cabinet chaired by Churchill and held in the Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons. The progress of educational legislation took little of the Cabinet's time.[28] According to the minutes Butler presented his statement and evoked only three observations. One was Churchill's irrelevant enquiry about the use of instructional films in schools which has already been noted. Butler passed this over by offering to send a note to the Prime Minister on the matter. The only point of significance was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He proposed that the phrase which tied the start of reform to "the end of the war in Europe" should be shortened to omit "in Europe". Thus, when this was agreed, the timetable for the introduction of reforms was put back. Ede recorded in his diary that Churchill responded to anxieties about religious difficulties by saying that there should be a free vote of the Commons on the understanding that, if the scheme were defeated, the most generous example of religious toleration in the history of the world would be destroyed.[29] It is not surprising that this view, even though it came from the Prime Minister, was not recorded in the minutes, for it was not the intention of anybody concerned with educational reform to allow anything so unpredictable as a free vote of the Commons on this issue. The remark is yet another example of Churchill's uninvolvement in educational reform and

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26 H.C.Debates,vol.390,col.2240,8.7.43
27 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,8.7.43
28 P.R.O.,Cab65/35 Minute 98(43),13.7.43
A comment of Ellen Wilkinson's partly explains the scant attention given to the matter."When Mr.Attlee is presiding in the absence of the Prime Minister the Cabinet meets on time, works systematically through the agenda, makes the necessary decisions and goes home after three or four hour's work.When Mr.Churchill presides we never reach the agenda and we decide nothing.But we go home to bed at midnight conscious of having been present at an historic occasion."Quoted in K.Martin,Harold Laski,London 1953,p.158
29 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,13.7.43

incomprehension of the issues. The essential decisions seem to have gone through on the nod. It was agreed to publish a White Paper on 16 July, hold a debate two weeks later, and introduce legislation in the next session.

The announcement of the White Paper's publication on 16 July was an anti-climax. Fewer than fifty M.Ps. were in the Commons to hear Butler's statement and receive their copies. The diarist in the London evening newspaper, the Star, headed his item, "Playing Truant". His explanation was that the Board did not give much notice and that it was the first Friday sitting of the House for more than three years. Many M.Ps. had left for their constituencies. Nonetheless it was the fulfilment of long negotiations and marked a consolidation and elaboration of the plans laid in the Green Book two years earlier.[30]

Both in its statement of aims and in its specific proposals for secondary education the White Paper accepted the Hadow scheme with its segregated secondary schooling and did little more than follow some of that scheme's proposals to their logical conclusions. Its opening sentences referred to the need to develop "various talents" in children. "The new educational opportunities must not, therefore, be of a single pattern," it announced. "It is just as important to achieve diversity as it is to ensure equality of educational opportunity." It is true that the next sentence reassured those who saw the vocational and social implications of this approach, for it read, "But such diversity must not impair the social unity within the educational system which will open the way to a more closely-knit society." The need for segregated education was immediately emphasized, however, thus, "After 11 secondary education, of diversified types but of equal standing, will be provided for all children."[31] Having described the three types of existing post-primary schools it announced, "Such, then, will be the three main

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30 Star, 16.7.43, p.2
31 White Paper, p.3

types of secondary schools to be known as grammar, modern and technical schools."[32]

The reader might have expected a section denouncing the defects of selection within the Hadow scheme to presage some radical change in those aspects of it. "There is nothing to be said in favour of a system which subjects children at the age of 11 to the strain of a competitive examination on which, not only their future schooling, but their future careers may depend. Apart from the effect on the children, there is the effect on the curriculum of the schools themselves," it stated. The irrevocability of decisions taken at the age of 11 was criticised thus, "it is obvious that a final selection at the age of 11 makes no allowance for the child who develops later than the majority of his fellows."[33] The retention of fees was roundly condemned thus, "A system under which fees are charged in one type of post-primary school and prohibited in the other offends against the canon that the nature of a child's education should be determined by his capacity and promise and not by the financial circumstances of his parent."[34] Yet when the reader came to the proposals for removing these defects he saw that the different schools were to serve quite different purposes and that local education authorities would have to define the nature of the education to be given in them. The only hope offered to junior schools was that "other arrangements for the classification of the children at 11" would enable them to "devote themselves to their proper task." Announcing that competitive tests on children would be abolished, the authors of the White Paper had needed considerable drafting skill to produce an alternative means for deciding which children should go to which schools, and it must have been difficult for readers to imagine what was intended by "an assessment of their individual aptitudes largely by such means as school records, supplemented, if necessary, by intelligence tests, due

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32 Ibid.,p.10
33 Ibid.,p.6
34 Ibid.,p.7

regard being had to their parents' wishes and the careers they have in mind."[35] It was acknowledged that the existing secondary school "completely overshadowed all other types of school for children over 11", because of the tradition of English grammar schools, their superior premises and staffing, and the long school life of their pupils. Whilst accepting that "choice" (which seemed to be regarded as different from selection and allocation and implied that the choice would be made by pupils and parents) required conditions in the different types of school to be "broadly equivalent", it did not propose to end any of those advantages of the grammar school which it had acknowledged, except to offer that the leaving age might be raised to 16 at a later date[36] and that conditions in the modern schools would be "assimilated to those of the grammar schools" in such matters as standards of accommodation and the size of classes.[37] Thus the crucial differences between existing secondary schools and existing senior elementary schools were to remain; these were that the secondary schools - the new grammar schools - were to have longer courses, different courses leading to better careers, better-educated teachers and the exclusiveness which followed from having pupils who were a selected minority.

The wording of the sections on fees in secondary schools and on the direct grant schools needed careful reading. It was argued that bringing all post-primary schools into one general system of secondary education would remove the "justification for continuing fees in any type of maintained secondary school."[38] The important word was "maintained"; there was no commitment to abolish fees in voluntary or direct grant schools, although the decision had in fact been taken that they should be abolished in the former. The direct grant school question was to be left on one side until the report of the Fleming

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35 Ibid.,p.9
36 Ibid.,p.7
37 Ibid.,p.11
38 Ibid.,p.11

Committee was available, but it was claimed that this was a side issue and that postponement of a decision would "in no way prejudice the general reconstruction of secondary education."[39]

There was only one concession to specifically Labour demands. (The inclusion of all post-primary education under one secondary code and the abolition of fees in secondary schools other than direct grant schools were universally desired). Having reviewed the three types of school, the White Paper stated that, "It would be wrong to suppose that they will necessarily remain separate and apart. Different types may be combined in one building or one site as considerations of convenience and efficiency may suggest. In any case free interchange of pupils from one type of education to another must be facilitated." This could be read as an allusion to multilateral schools but it will be noted that convenience and efficiency, not educational principles, were to be the criteria for determining whether such developments could take place. This was an echo of the Spens Report, which had foreseen the need for multilateral schools in areas where the demand for secondary places was too low to make possible the creation of separate schools whilst rejecting them as part of the normal pattern of secondary education. The White Paper was the final confirmation that Ede's success in keeping any reference to the three types of school out of the draft Bill was not a political coup which would leave a future Labour government with a clean slate. The development of secondary schooling on strictly Hadow lines was to be continued and the omission of a reference to the types of school merely reflected the view that legislation which might last for decades should not include specific and restrictive definitions of the school types which local authorities would have statutorily to provide.

In a reference to Churchill's wireless speech about a four-year

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39 This matter is discussed more fully, infra pp.223-232

programme of general social advancement, the reorganisation of the schools into primary and secondary stages with a break at 11 and with a leaving age of 15 and with compulsory part-time education to 18 were identified as the limit of possible achievements within that programme.[40] The Board's order of priorities and particularly the relegation of raising the leaving age to 16 to a position below that of continued part-time education were thus confirmed. In every point on secondary education the White Paper was identical to the Green Book. Only one Green Book proposal was not yet confirmed and that was the retention of fee-paying in direct grant schools.

The most marked feature of the White Paper was the contrast between its strong condemnation of the past, in particular the consequences of selection and segregation of children at 11, and its proposals which by and large continued these practices into the future. The two parts were almost contradictory. It was as though there was scant connection between the initial critique and the subsequent proposals. This may have resulted from the contribution of Ede. A few days before the publication of the White Paper Attlee had asked that some introductory paragraphs should be added to explain the main proposals. This was done at the Board on 6 July, just ten days before the White Paper was officially unveiled and only two days before it was unofficially reviewed in most of the daily newspapers. Ede recorded in his diary that he contributed "several descriptive phrases" to these paragraphs.[41] It may be that these polemical opening sections of the White Paper were mainly a Labour contribution, having been requested by Attlee and partly drafted by Ede. The rest of the work was firmly rooted in the soil which the Board's officials had tilled in the Spring of 1941 and was clearly their work. That would explain why the critique of the past was more radical than the

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40 White Paper, p.4

41 B.L., Ede Diary, vol.7, 6.7.43

proposals for the future.

The White Paper was very well received by the press which sent twenty-five lobby correspondents to Butler's press conference,[42] and its nature as a work of concensus was emphasized. The Times gave a four-column summary and in a leader it welcomed it as representing an agreed solution to Britain's educational problems. "The unmistakable trend of the public discussion of educational reform" guaranteed little opposition. Butler's "success in these all-important preliminaries promises that, in the field of education, the coalition will be justified by its fruit." The Manchester Guardian, which also gave a long summary, commented similarly. "Preparation has been so careful and the whole proposals so thoroughly discussed with interested parties", wrote its London Correspondent, "that the Government has been encouraged to believe that wide acceptance has already been gained for the proposals." In a leader it hailed the White Paper as marking "the opening of a new era." Seeing it as a clarion call, the editor said, "The Board, with Butler at its head, has sounded the advance all along the line." To emphasize its uncontroversial nature the newspaper added that, of its proposals "few are novel." The Times Educational Supplement called it "a landmark" and offered Butler "unstinted congratulations and thanks". The Schoolmaster, organ of the N.U.T., published the White Paper almost verbatim and warned that the proposals should not be wrecked by "institutions, forms and interests" which aimed "to conserve a hold on the educational system which has outlived its day."[43]

The Daily Herald's education correspondent, Maurice Webb, had the headline, "£67,000,000 more for education" over one of his two prominent articles which appeared the morning after the White Paper's publication.

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42 Ibid.,16.7.43

43 Times,17.7.43,p.5:Manchester Guardian,17.7.43,p.6 and p.8; Times Educational Supplement,24.7.43,p.355,Schoolmaster,22.7.43,p.54

He saw that not all shades of opinion would be satisfied and expected "some uneasiness and apprehension about certain features of the White Paper, notably in its references to the school-leaving age being raised to 16 at a later date. It is to be hoped that the coming bill will give much more precision to this rather nebulous promise," but he recognised that the training of more teachers and the completion of re-organisation must precede this. He had expressed a similar anxiety at Butler's press conference.[44] His assessment was that, "there will be no virulent controversy about the main features of the plan but it will however require some adjustment before it reaches the stage of legislation if it is to have completely united backing in the Commons."[45]

Webb's assessment was shrewd as far as the Labour movement was concerned. Four days after the publication of the White Paper, Ede went to the Administrative Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party to discuss it. By his own account[46] he listed the seventeen points which the Labour Party had put in its deputation to Butler in February and related each of them to a section of the White Paper, achieving general agreement that the government's proposals satisfied Labour's requirements. That part of the exercise was rather carelessly carried out by members of the committee. The first Labour demand, for a leaving age of 15 immediately the war ended and of 16 within three years of that, was related to the White Paper's section 22 which offered much less. The second demand was for a common secondary code and standards, and included the stipulation that the Board should "require" the development of multilateral schools as a general policy, whereas the White Paper reference to multilateral schools was quite different. By pointing to the fact that the White Paper mentioned most of the points in Labour's list of demands, Ede seems to have convinced the members of the committee that there was some similarity between the two documents, whereas the

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44 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,16.7.43
45 Daily Herald,17.7.43,p.1 and p.2
46 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,20.7.43

actual proposals in the White Paper did not match Labour's demands on these points or on others such as the mandatory provision of nursery education and the abolition of the direct grant system. Ede may have been helped at this stage by members' unfamiliarity with the text of the White Paper or by their having been impressed by the radical sentiments expressed in its opening paragraphs. Ede also used the disarming argument that the proposed legislation was to be enabling not limiting; this argument required the deferment of judgement until a post-war government acted.

Ede may well have been helped by a disarming interview which Butler had given to the Sunday Times the previous Sunday. It was not so much an interview as a long statement in question and answer form, with Butler framing both parts. On the question of the leaving age he stated, "I am personally in favour of a school leaving age of 16... The fact is that the principle of raising the school age to 16 is accepted by the government." Until re-organisation was completed, however, the reform would be a sham. The variety of schools was portrayed as a feature not of selection but of parental choice. "Will it, for example, still be possible for parents to send their children to schools of their own choice?" he asked himself. "Yes," he replied,"... One of the main features of the plan is that diversity of choice is reserved for parents - hence the retention of various kinds of school."[47]

By his own account Ede seems to have been discomforted only by one question at the party meeting. Shinwell asked him what would happen if too many children wanted to go to the grammar schools. That went to the heart of the matter and Ede's limp reply was that it was a matter for local administration and that the local authority would have to adjudicate. Whether the significance of that response

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47 Sunday Times,18.7.43,p.4

was evident to the members of the committee, we do not know, but it was clear from Ede's reply that the availability of places and the decision of the local authority were to be the decisive factors in a child's allocation to one of the three types of school and not his parents' wishes or educational factors. The fact that the system would perforce be competitive rather than related to the individual needs of children was starkly revealed by Shinwell's shrewd question. That apart, Ede seems to have been very successful in presenting the White Paper as the fulfilment of Labour's wishes for, although the committee was not prepared at this stage to endorse the religious settlement, it did endorse the secular proposals of the White Paper.

The same day Ede began to collect the opinions of Labour M.Ps. He lunched with George Strauss who warned him that Tribune, which Strauss owned, was going to be critical. George Ridley, the new chairman of the National Executive Committee, thought that the proposals were good, but he relayed the opinion of Harold Laski that they were too vague especially in the matter of dates. Ede's response to this was that dates were not appropriate to a White Paper, although he knew of course that it was not the intention at the Board to include dates in any case. The claim by Aneurin Bevan that the White Paper's reference to Churchill's four year plan was unconstitutional (presumably on the ground that it assumed Churchill would be Prime Minister then) was telephoned by Ede to Butler. Ede claimed the support of Shinwell in rejecting this view.

The next day Ede attended the Parliamentary Labour Party meeting, where Greenwood read out the innocuous motion to be laid before the Commons welcoming the government's plans. Cove intervened to say that some of his friends and he did not wish to be bound by the motion, and he disparaged the White Paper. Ede defended it as the "greatest state

document ever issued on education" and received Morrison's congratulations. When urging his party to press for an early raising of the leaving age to 16, however, he was asking them to do what he had himself singularly failed to do within the sanctum itself.[48]

Two days later a specially-summoned meeting of the Labour Party's Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee was held to discuss the White Paper.[49] Those who had taken leading parts in the earlier discussions to formulate party policy - Clay, Bacon, Cove, Franklin, Shearman, Drake - were all present. Their reaction to the White Paper took the form of a resolution which welcomed its exposure of the defects in the present system and its intention to carry through reforms, but expressed anxiety about "uncertainty" over raising the leaving age to 16 which was "of crucial importance for the realisation of equality of educational opportunity at the secondary stage." It was also anxious about the relation of progress in implementing the plan to prevailing financial conditions. This might cause the whole plan to "fade away under pressure from reactionary interests." It sought "definite and specific pledges" that social equality in secondary education would be achieved. Having stated its view, it did not meet again until January 1944, when the Bill had been published, presumably considering that others, M.Ps. for example, now had the responsibility to win the pledges which it had demanded.

Clay put his views to a wider audience the following day in a Daily Herald interview with Maurice Webb.[50] He was introduced as chairman of Labour's Education Committee and "a man who has been prominent in the long private discussions which took place before Mr. Butler issued his White Paper." The government's plans were "a very considerable advance" in his view, and "the general conception

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48 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,21.5.43
49 T.H.,Labour Party Records,Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee, Minute 18,23.7.43
50 Daily Herald,24.7.43,p.2

is...one which we should approve." His fears were about timing and priorities. "Mr.Butler will have to give us more...specific assurances on these things than he has yet supplied," he said, conveying the demand of his committee made the previous day. He considered that the statement on raising the leaving age to 16 was "too vague and non-committal." He wanted the government to appraise realistically the situation and include an appointed day for the reform which it could reasonably expect to honour. Local authorities needed a target. On the pattern of secondary education he considered that the White Paper proposals were an advance. "In many ways the proposal to have diversity of types of secondary education available to all children is sound and a big step forward," he commented. "It is at least something to get the word 'elementary' and all it connotes removed from the educational system." His own preference was for multilateral schools which he defined as "one comprehensive secondary school which would provide the three types of education under one roof," but, "if we can't yet have that, we must accept the White Paper plan as an undoubted improvement on the present position." His third reservation was about the vagueness on the question of fees. For him "it would be intolerable if we allowed any monetary or social distinctions to remain in any school receiving money from public funds." Thus he had three major reservations which all related to Labour's hopes for secondary education which was equally available to all without social or financial distinction. But his final verdict was that "in general...Labour should give its backing to the ideas embodied in the new conception of education".

The National Association of Labour Teachers was more forthright in its condemnation of the White Paper's failure to meet Labour's demands. Its chairman, Cove, in the Tribune article which Strauss had forecast, described the White Paper as "profoundly disappointing."[51] The preface to

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51 Tribune,23.7.43,pp.10-11

Cove's article reminded readers that Butler had been noted for his role at the Foreign Office during the Spanish Civil War when he had stolidly defended a policy of non-intervention, thus helping to give fascism its first great military victory. Cove took up this theme and related post-war social policy to the sacrifices being made by working men in their defence of freedom against fascism now. "Measured by these standards," he commented, "it is a White Paper of mocking cynical impudence." He noted that the crucial proposals were vague and wondered whether some of them would ever come to fruition. "These appointed days may never come," he warned. His headline was, "Stonewall Butler". A few days later a message to M.Ps. from N.A.L.T.'s Executive received good coverage in the press.[52] It too was very critical of the White Paper. The headlines it spawned tell their own story. "Teachers see false hopes in school plans," announced the Daily Mirror. The Northern Echo took N.A.L.T.'s message to be, "Privileges more fortified." "Labour teachers severely criticise new education scheme," was the Morning Advertiser's verdict. Maurice Webb in the Daily Herald proclaimed, "Labour teachers say education scheme does little very slowly. They demand better school plan." The Times Educational Supplement quoted N.A.L.T.'s view that the Board was "doing as little as possible as slowly as possible."[53] Ede commented bitterly in his diary that it was "clearly Cove's handiwork.[54]

All of these reactions occurred in the fortnight between the publication of the White Paper and the two-day Commons debate on 29-30 July. Butler's presentation of the White Paper began with a reference to the 1902 religious controversies, and he claimed that "personal, sectarian and political feelings" had in 1943 been "subordinated to the interests of the children." This was the apogee of the consensus argument. The subduing of political as well as sectarian objectives was now explicit. He went on to acknowledge that

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52 G.L.C.,A/NLT/I/2.Minute of meeting ? 7.43,states that,after discussion,Spikes was to draw up a statement which was to be approved by Cove and published.The statement was in the form of a two-page duplicated paper,signed by Denington.The Minute of 11.9.43 indicates that it was sent only to Labour M.Ps.

53 Daily Mirror,p.2;Northern Echo,p.2;Morning Advertiser,p.5; Daily Herald,p.3;all 27.7.43.Times Educational Supplement,31.7.43, p.363

54 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,21.7.43

"we may all desire to put our own points," but the clear implication was that nobody should in fact do so. The strategy of Butler and Ede was to stand by every important decision which had already been taken, for to allow doubts to arise about their resolve on any one point would invite further discussion of them all. The continuing anxiety that the church school controversy might yet become a major obstacle is evidenced by Butler's devoting more of his speech to it than he did to the whole of secondary education. Since trouble was now likely to come mainly from the Roman Catholic corner, the Labour Party was reminded by the intervention of two R.C.Labour M.Ps. during Butler's speech of the special difficulties which it might encounter.[55]

Butler's speech[56] showed that the White Paper's vagueness about how pupils should be allocated to the three types of secondary school was not just a failure of drafting, although he now seemed to acknowledge the inherent incompatability of selection and parental choice. Welcoming the end of the special place examination which was "hanging over the whole of the junior world", he looked forward to the future when "a child may be selected according to its talents for the various different types of secondary education." Thus selection was to remain and only the method of doing it was to be altered. The role of parents was somewhat ill-defined, for he said only that the government would try to bring them in "to making the choice for the secondary opportunities which we propose to give to the children after the opinion of the teacher has been given." Such phrases avoided an explanation of where final authority would lie, such as Ede had offered to Shinwell a few days earlier. In a frank passage during which he admitted his initial doubts about tri-partism but also implicitly rejected multilateralism, he confessed that he had wondered whether the three choices in fact existed. But he explained that, as a result of his visits to schools around the country he had concluded that "we can offer in this country secondary

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55 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.1836,29.7.43;the M.Ps.were Logan and Stokes
56 Ibid.,cols.1825-1845,29.7.43

choices so adequate and varied that in our own way and according to our own tradition, we shall be building a system of secondary education for all which will serve our purposes as a compact nation just as well as the high school system serves the purposes of the great American democracy." When he turned to the first of the three types of school - the senior elementary now to be named modern school - he referred to "those idealists" who wanted multilateral schools,and hoped that "more than one type of secondary education may from time to time be amalgamated under one roof and that we may judge from experiments what is the best arrangement." It is interesting to note that he left Ede to deal with the technical school when winding up the debate the following day - perhaps an indication that the technical school was already a misfit and a poor relation. Ten years later it was to be observed of the tripartite system that, "one of the thing's three legs is frequently underdeveloped or atrophied and that it is only in men's imaginations that the true triplex formation, with a real place for organic development on the technical side, is to be found."[57] From the decisions already taken by July 1943 it could hardly have been otherwise. It is interesting to see that doubts about the success of tripartism, which had in the past been expressed strongly by Cleary and had been a major plank in the arguments of one side in the Board's internal debate over the respective merits of common and differentiated schooling for the 11 to 13 year olds, now made a brief appearance in the first major speech in the Commons by the ministerial architect of the educational reforms.

Butler evaded the issue of the direct grant schools. He referred to the decision to make secondary education free and concluded that, "thus, all three types...will be equally accessible," but he left the future of the direct grant schools on one side until Fleming had reported. His position, as we have seen, was uncertain on this topic.

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57 A.V.Judges, 'Tradition and the Comprehensive School', British Journal of Educational Studies, vol.II, no.1, November 1953, p.5

He had, of course, already received the interim report from Lord Fleming.[58]

In his comments on the raising of the leaving age Butler was more confident of his position and consequently more open. As ever, there was no discussion of the merits of a leaving age of 16; these were tacitly accepted. The matter was discussed as always in the context of timing; and the suspected reluctance of working class parents to see their children's schooling extended if it meant yet another year in an all-age school following an elementary curriculum was exploited. Butler shrewdly observed that he could not compel parents to send their 15-year old children to an all-age school with perhaps only two or three teachers. He was not able to be definite about how soon the leaving age could be raised to 16, for that would depend upon the supply of building materials and teachers, but he did say that it "must depend upon the virtual completion of re-organisation." Holmes' formula for satisfying the demand that the leaving age should be 16, without committing the Board to any action whatsoever, which he had first advanced in September 1941,[59] found its way into Butler's White Paper speech when he announced that legislation would give the government the power to do it by order-in-council. The leaving age would be raised to 15 without exemption as soon as possible after the end of the war.

Just as the opening of Butler's speech was the high point of the consensus argument, so Ede's speech[60] made plain the limitations imposed by his role as a Labour man in a National government. His speech was as a government, not a Labour spokesman, and we must read it as that. Ede's role during the debate was rather unkind to his own party's spokesman and illustrated well his use of his superior knowledge to discomfort his own side when party policies were being pressed. Already at the party meeting when had defended the White

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58 Supra p.169
59 Supra p.139
60 H.C.Debates,vol.391,cols.2033-2047,30.7.43

Paper he had turned aside a question from Creech-Jones and gained a laugh at his expense. Creech-Jones had asked him whether he had made an analysis of the T.U.C. Memorandum. Ede had responded that he owed no allegiance to the big bosses of the trade union world, a reference to the fact that Creech-Jones was Bevin's Parliamentary Private Secretary.[61] Now Creech-Jones was Labour's opening speaker and, when probing the vagueness of the White Paper on the question of the direct grant schools, he made the mistake of referring to them as grant-aided schools, a label which included secondary schools other than those receiving their grants direct from the Board. It was obvious which schools were the object of his doubts and he might have been forgiven the error, which arose because of the White Paper's pledge to abolish fees only in maintained schools whereas the government had intended to give a pledge to abolish all fees except those in direct grant schools, on which a decision had yet to be taken. Ede was not content to let the error pass, or to correct it briefly, but intervened three times.[62] There was dissatisfaction from his own party about the purpose of Ede's speech as soon as Butler indicated in his own speech that he was going to leave some points to be covered by his Parliamentary Secretary at the end of the debate. Cove interrupted Butler to ask whether it was intended that Ede would be dealing with new matters when according to normal practice he should be replying to the debate, and Creech-Jones also pressed this point.[63] That was indeed the intention and Ede's speech was not successful either in dealing with topics left over by Butler or in replying to the criticisms of M.Ps.

It was Ede's lot to speak about technical schools, for example, but he did not even mention them by name and he did little to enlighten his listeners on how these would fit into the general scheme

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61 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,20.7.43
62 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.1852,29.7.43
63 Ibid.,cols.1838-1839,29.7.43

of secondary education - a problem which had exercised the minds of the Board's officials for many months, limiting himself to the generalisations that they wanted to acknowledge the nobility of skilled craftsmanship and to "give greater attention than we have given hitherto to the individual aptitides and wishes of the pupils committed to our care." His comments indicated plainly his acceptance of the segregationist argument and confirmed that his objection to the tripartism intended for the text of the Bill was related to the rigidity of the scheme and the difficulty of giving it legislative embodiment rather than to segregated secondary schooling itself. His hope was that "the craftsman who, because nature meant him for a craftsman, gives of his best in his craft is regarded as an equal citizen, no more and no less, with the lad whose gifts are in literature and mathematics." Cove's incredulous interjection, "You give that dignity in this White Paper?" was brushed aside.[64] He did, however, emphasize his point and argued that schools should be geared to vocational objectives, saying that, "What our educational system ought to do more than it does is to see that the right person is doing the right job."

As a reply to the two-day debate Ede's speech was disappointing. He did not refer to problems of selection for secondary schools, and the raising of the leaving age was not mentioned at all. The latter point was clearly in his mind when he talked about the timetable of reform, but his Labour listeners cannot have been re-assured by his perspective. He recalled listening to the debate in Parliament on the 1902 Education Bill and had vivid memories of Haldane's speech, which he said had been drafted by Sidney Webb and which he considered the best ever delivered on education in the Commons. Every point raised in the two-day debate which he was concluding had, he claimed, been covered by Haldane more than forty years earlier. "I am not so

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64 Ibid., col.2039, 30.7.43

much impressed by the inevitability of gradualness," he commented, "as by the gradualness of inevitability." He could hardly have been more dispiriting to his own party. His aphorism may have aptly described the slow evolution of secondary education for all in schools with separate objectives and standards and with pre-selection of pupils at the age of 11. But his perspective had to serve not only as a general answer to the detailed criticisms which had been made during the debate, but also as the response to those Labour M.Ps. who wanted to welcome the White Paper whole-heartedly but who saw that without a commitment to a timetable it might all be a delusion. As he sat down, Butler said to him that his speech was "great, just the thing."[65]

The reaction of Labour M.Ps. to the White Paper combined congratulations, which reflected an appreciation of the gains promised, the hurdles still to be crossed and the dangers of rocking the boat, with reservations and anxieties lest those reforms most keenly desired by Labour might be the very ones which would not be achieved. Webb's report on the N.A.L.T. paper had finished with his observation that in the coming Commons debate Labour leaders "will have many criticisms of detail to offer...But on the whole it may be expected that they will take the view that the White Paper offers an advance which Labour should approve."[66] This reflected the Labour dilemma.

Creech-Jones, in opening Labour's contribution to the debate, was pleased that a complete plan and not piecemeal changes had been presented. But he had "many misgivings...as to whether the citadel of privilege has yet been finally taken, as to whether concessions of too important a character have been made to certain interests, and as to whether the vigorous spirit required for educational reform is sufficiently evident in the White Paper." The rest of his speech[67] listed profound anxieties. There were parts of the plan which were not yet ready, notably the role proposed for the public schools and the future of direct grant schools,

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65 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,30.7.43
66 Daily Herald,27.7.43,p.17
67 H.C.Debates,vol.391,cols.1845-1856,29.7.43

both of which issues were "highly controversial." He contrasted the White Paper's expressed desire for "social unity" and the need not to have fees in one type of school whilst they remained in others with the continuing doubts about the future of the direct grant schools. He did not officially know, of course, that the majority interim report of Lord Fleming's committee had already recommended the abolition of fees in local non-boarding direct grant schools. As long as there were doubts about this "some schools will enjoy, as in the past, a special status" and "some vested interests in education will be preserved". The plans for the dual system were a "compromise rather than a solution" and there was concern about "the price the President is prepared to pay for a settlement." Referring to the new categories of secondary schools Creech-Jones made the point, remarkable for its neglect by other commentators and politicians, that the extension of the dual system in the secondary stage of education was made much more complicated by the requirement that there should be three types of school. Clearly, if the churches were to mirror the types of the state system in their own secondary schools, a major extension of church-run schools would be required. As Creech-Jones observed, "important bodies...would have wished to end the dual system altogether." It is significant that he did not identify his own party as one of them. A "profoundly disturbing" aspect of the White Paper was its reference to timing. Labour wanted "priority" for education and "an eager urge forward." Particularly to be regretted was the lack of "a target date for raising the age to 16." There were even caveats, he noted, about raising the leaving age to 15, and he was concerned to read the White Paper comment that "the needs of industry will have to be considered." Noting that the financial appendix to the White Paper did not envisage raising the leaving age to 16 for at least eight years,

he commented, "I cannot see how it is to be possible to work the secondary arrangements if certain types of education are to have a four-year period and a grammar school type of education is to have a five-year period...instead of achieving a common status in the various types of secondary school, we are again perpetuating the rather superior status of the grammar school whose normal leaving age is 16." The effect of the recently-published Norwood Report was evident in his comments on tripartism. Referring to the report's advocacy of three types of school he acknowledged that, "There is a difference of view as to whether it is a desirable type of change to bring all types of secondary education under one roof," but he "hoped that there will be established a number of multilateral schools" and the rest of his observations argued for such schools. "If there is to be a common code and a common status, and if we are to attach in education just as much importance to technical as to narrow academic or grammar subjects," he argued, "it is obvious that the more you bring together the children under the same roof who are pursuing different paths the more likely are you to get a common standard and a common code operating between one kind of education and another."

On the second day of the debate Arthur Greenwood opened for Labour and he questioned both the segregation of children at 11 and the weakness of the commitment to raise the leaving age.[68] He regretted that they were going to bring about "this parting of the ways at the age of 11 plus." Teachers could not foresee how a child would develop and any "hiving off in a particular direction...would... be a profound mistake." For that reason "there is something to be said for easiness of transfer, for what are called the multilateral schools." Short of that he wanted "a constant review" of children's progress to ensure transfers. The raising of the leaving age he

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68 Ibid.,cols.1937-1945,30.7.43

considered to be "long overdue". He thought that the government should be courageous and fix dates in the Bill which were "not too far ahead". If they were not in the event able to implement the reforms by those dates, having done all that was possible, they should then come to Parliament for pardon. Thus he wanted to put a legislative obligation on the government which it would need Parliament's permission not to honour. This was in line with his desire to jerk the Board out of its "unduly pessimistic" attitude and to see the President as "the chief crusader for education."

Cove joined in the general praise for Butler, but his praise was heavily qualified and his contribution to the debate more politically aware than other Labour spokesmen's.[69] He observed that Butler had gone only as far as the political interests which he represented would permit. The result was a White Paper which was too cautious and which was produced "under somewhat difficult political circumstances." He regretted that they were debating an evolutionary White Paper whereas the post-war situation would demand a revolutionary one. Addressing his own party he said that they had played a part in ensuring that Hitler should be fought. That was a political decision and his party had a responsibility to ensure that in the educational sphere as in others there should be a new world after the war. This part of his speech echoed his Tribune article and also an article in the N.A.L.T. Bulletin of February 1943 entitled "Must we lose the peace?" in which the need to transform post-war Britain was seen as an obligation, particularly on the Labour Party, which arose from the decision to make war on fascism.[70] He was made despondent by the Sunday Times interview in which Butler had warned that the reforms involved a steady increase in expenditure and that they would be brought in when equipment and money allowed. "That had the effect of a torpedo," he commented. His anxieties were the same as Creech-

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69 Ibid.,cols.1958-1962,30.7.43
70 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1V/15/10,Bulletin,February 1943

Jones' and Greenwood's. He expected the appointed days to be the same as in the Fisher Act, i.e. "the appointed day that never arrived." He was doubtful whether secondary education for all even now was to become a reality. Observing that the special place examination was "not an examination to select but an examination to exclude", he commented that nothing was gained by changing the method of exclusion. The only answer was to have genuine secondary education for all which would not be achieved by bringing all post-primary schools within the same code. Raising the leaving age to 16 was essential, and he regretted the absence of any financial provision to bring it about. The abolition of all fees was essential, yet the retention of fees in direct grant schools was still a possibility.

T.M.Sexton, who sat for Barnard Castle in Durham, feared that the recommendations might be postponed "for another generation". Speaking as a teacher[71] he explained how hard it was for a working class child to rise up the educational ladder, and he advised that they should be cautious about the separation of children into three different schools. "Perhaps it would be wiser to have multilateral schools," he said. "This would prevent the evil of competing grades and the abbreviated labels - 'gram.', 'tec.' and 'mod.' being applied to them." The alternative position on this question was taken by Denman, the member for Leeds, Central. He applauded Butler's use of the word 'diversity' and urged members to "beware of the pursuit of equality". For him equality of opportunity was a chimera which could lead only to uniformity. Bluntly he stated, "I welcome what the President said about grammar schools."[72] Kenneth Lindsay, the National Labour M.P. for Kilmarnock Burghs and Ede's predecessor as Parliamentary Secretary at the Board, countered Denman's argument with the claim that, "You can have equality of access to an agreed standard of physical provision."[73]

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71 H.C.Debates,vol.391,cols.1862-1866,29.7.43;he was an elementary schoolmaster and headmaster of Stanhope County School for 26 years

72 Ibid., cols.1882-1883,29.7.43

73 Ibid., col.1946,30.7.43

The M.P. for Dartford, Mrs.J.L.Adamson, who had won the seat for Labour from the Conservatives in a 1938 by-election by increasing her party's vote by more than ten thousand and who was Labour Party Chairman, contributed Bevin's oft-repeated argument that, "Until the age is raised to 16, secondary education...cannot be provided for the mass of the people of this country, whatever name we give to the new secondary school." She was sceptical about the arrangements for selection at 11 and transfer for misfits at 13. "I believe it is impossible to determine at the age of 11 a child's bent," she argued, "No test has yet been devised to do that."[74] Even more sceptical was C.W.Key who had succeeded George Lansbury as Labour member for Poplar (Bow and Bromley) in 1940. As an elementary schoolmaster he had "doubts and misgivings" about the White Paper's "lack of determination to see that the things talked of are translated into fact." The timetable which required four years to raise the leaving age to 15 was "a deadening doctrine." Like Cove he alluded to the patriotic effort to defeat fascism, in which the national interest had predominated over financial interests. It was the failure by Butler to insist upon the same attitude towards post-war educational reform which disappointed him. He attacked the failure to deal with the direct grant school question and "this supine crawl which the financial table in the Appendix reveals as the pace at which the Board of Education anticipates educational advance will take place."[75]

A contribution of special interest was that of A.G.Walkden, the member for Bristol South who had been a railway clerk in the last decade of the nineteenth century, general-secretary of the Railway Clerks' Association for thirty years and Chairman of the T.U.C.General Council. When Ede had learned from Strauss of Cove's imminent

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74 Ibid.,col.2015,30.7.43
75 Ibid.,cols.2019-2020,30.7.43

Tribune article, he had telephoned Walkden and asked him to speak in the White Paper debate. Walkden had agreed, saying that he would gain much pleasure in counteracting Cove's pessimism.[76] His contribution did not quite live up to this undertaking. It was true that his speech was littered with rather sycophantic plaudits for Butler who was thanked for his "hard work", his "delightful speech" and for having "worked terribly hard", but like other speakers for the Labour side he wanted more precise dates and a shorter time-scale. In particular he wanted the abolition of fees, saying that they "should wipe away this class distinction."[77] He did not refer to Cove and, although his tone was milder, his general themes were similar to those of other Labour members. He did not prove especially valuable as Ede's place-man.

The Labour Party was reminded by the contributions of some of its Roman Catholic members to the debate that, as a body pressing for educational reform, it had an Achilles' heel. It was a Conservative, Sir Harold Webbe ,M.P. for Westminster, who observed that "there are indications, not only in all our postbags but in this House today, that the storm may break." Although Henry Brooke, M.P. for Lewisham, spoke briefly in the Anglican interest, those indications in the Commons to which Webbe referred were mainly from the Labour side. A Conservative, Sir John Shute who represented Liverpool Exchange, denigrated the T.U.C. decision to recommend the end of the dual system. His concern was mitigated by his certainty that this view was not shared by a majority of Labour M.Ps. He was also able to draw comfort from the comment of "an important Labour leader" from the Liverpool area that it would help the Conservative Party. The consensus argument was again to the fore;

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76 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,20.7.43
77 H.C.Debates,vol.391,cols.2002-2004,30.7.43

he believed that the existence of a coalition government would help to solve this problem. When his fellow Liverpool M.P., D.G.Logan, who held the Scotland division in the Labour interest, advocated the Roman Catholic case, Alexander Walkden made it clear to the House that such sectarianism was rejected by Labour and that Logan was speaking for his church and not for his party.[78]

Whilst the Roman Catholic agitation was inhibiting to Labour and whilst the tenor of the Parliamentary Labour Party's response to the White Paper was to welcome it and praise its authors, there was sufficient anxiety for most Labour speakers to express scepticism about the government's true intentions on those aspects which were of especial importance to Labour - the impossibility of forecasting at the age of 11 children's abilities, the need for multilateral schools, the imperative requirement that plans should be made at once to raise the leaving age to 16. There was much disquiet in Labour's parliamentary ranks.

Labour M.Ps. were not alone in their anxieties. By far the most radical and trenchant criticisms, amounting to a despairing denunciation of the White Paper, came from Sir Richard Acland, the maverick Independent M.P. Acland had been elected as a Liberal to represent Barnstaple, but he had quarrelled with his party and, as leader of the Common Wealth Party, had already indicated his intention to look for another seat at the next election. His critique was like that which an uninhibited Labour spokesman might have made.[79] Willing to divide the House if anybody would support him, he attacked the White Paper for its subordination of worthy aims to financial criteria. Looking at the proposals with an historical perspective, he regarded the aspirations of the last twenty years as "not altogether a bad target," but one approached "at a gentlemanly crawl." The new target was good. "But let us face the fact," he admonished the House, "that ...

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78 Ibid.,cols.1858,1911,1893,2003,29-30.7.43
79 Ibid.,cols.1966-1969,30.7.43

we have done nothing whatever about the pace at which we approach it." He did not admire the U.S.S.R.'s use of education, but he did admire its ability to build the schools which it needed once it had abandoned the Tsarist taxation system and capitalist industry and "put all their resources on one balance sheet." This argument was similar to Cove's in the Tribune. There was a splendid scheme which would not be realised because the priorities of a capitalist industrial system would not be challenged. The will of the Commons was less important than "the rigid financial conditions imposed on this House and the country by the economic system we maintain." The postponement of decisions about the public schools particularly attracted his scorn. "How clever," he scoffed. His, however, was a lone voice.

Multilateral schooling and the principles on which it was founded were favoured by a Conservative, albeit one of independent outlook, Mrs.Cazalet Keir who represented Islington East. She must have been in some distress, for her brother and fellow M.P., Colonel Victor Cazalet, who had been liaison officer with Polish forces since 1940, had been on board General Sikorski's 'plane when it had left Gibraltar on the 4 July for England and he had suffered the same fate as the Polish Prime Minister. She expressed doubts about the proposed tripartite division of secondary education. Acknowledging that both Spens and Norwood had recommended this arrangement, she preferred all secondary schools to be similar, but to have biases. For her, education from 11 to 15 or 16 should be general with vocational training taking second place. "I am very glad to hear that the children will be freely interchanged between the schools," she declared.[80] That was an optimistic view of what might happen, but she was merely accepting at its face value the answer given by advocates of segregated education to those critics who worried about

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80 Ibid.,col.1922,29.7.43

misplacements. Henry Brooke (Lewisham West), who was to act mainly as an Anglican spokesman and defender of direct grant schools in the Commons debates, was perhaps a more typical Conservative. He hoped that "the three kinds of schools will be kept close together... and that the practical means of moving children from one type of school to another...will be made as easy as possible. It will be easiest when all three types of school are on the same site or in close proximity."[81] Misgivings about tri-partism and sympathy for multilateralism were not confined to Labour's ranks.

Some of the manipulation of committees and the use of apparently independent bodies, which would advise the Board to do what in any case it intended to do, became manifest at this time. The publication of the Norwood Report, between the publication of the White Paper and the Commons debate on it, ensured that Norwood's views on tripartism could be called in support of the Board's plans. Certainly the press saw the Norwood Report as complementary to the White Paper and the timing of its publication ensured that this was so. The Manchester Guardian carried a two-column summary of the report and commented that it "fills out the programme." Noting that the government was already committed to secondary education in three types of schools, the newspaper commented that Norwood gave "a conspectus of the 'secondary education for all' to which the government is now committed."[82] The Times' comment also connected the two publications. The Norwood Report gave "body and substance" to the White Paper proposals. It considered that "perhaps its most significant feature" was that it had "a defined philosophy of education", viz. to retain unaltered the existing "traditional grammar school curriculum", and to place it in a school structure divided between primary education which was concerned with basic skills and secondary education which had to cater for special

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81 Ibid.,col.1911,29.7.43
82 Manchester Guardian,26.7.43,p.3 and p.4

interests and aptitudes. The Times did regret that the committee was limited to a consideration of grammar schools, but nonetheless thought that its "proposals will carry a preponderance of informed opinion with them."[83] The Daily Mirror noted that Norwood followed "the government's declared policy that secondary education will be provided for all in three types."[84] The Times Educational Supplement also noted Norwood's confirmation of the three types of school, but also thought that he had left the door "fairly wide open for experiments in multilateralism."[85]

The timing of the report's publication was hardly fortuitous. Firstly the White Paper was published and then a few days later the Norwood Report appeared, as "a valuable contribution from an independent source." As we have seen[86] Norwood discovered and described three types of mentality which conveniently fitted the three types of secondary school which already existed and which were to continue on even more rigidly differentiated lines. It seems that the desire to publish at this time led to the constitutional indiscretion of not referring the report first to the Secondary Schools Examination Council. It will be recalled that Norwood's committee had been set up on the initiative of the S.S.E.C., of which he was chairman, and the members of the council had quite properly expected the committee to report to them and not directly to the Board. If that procedure had been followed the publication of the report would have been delayed, especially since some of its recommendations on examinations might have been (and in the event proved to be) controversial with many examining boards represented on the S.S.E.C.[87] There were other criticisms of it which would have caused delay at the S.S.E.C. The committee had wandered far beyond the topic which the Council had in mind when resolving to set it up. The report was also critised because it listed those bodies which had submitted evidence and gave the impression that

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83 Times,26.7.43,p.5
84 Daily Mirror,26.7.43,p.4-5
85 Times Educational Supplement,31.7.43,p.367
86 Supra,p. 124
87 P.H.J.H.Gosden,Education in the Second World War,London 1976, pp.382-383

they had been consulted on all matters, whereas in practice the committee had adopted the unusual procedure of restricting respondents to making comments on only certain aspects of its studies. Some organisations realised, when they saw the report, that, besides those aspects on which they had been invited to submit their views, there were others on which they had not been invited to submit their views even though they were keenly interested in them. The committee was thus suspected of manipulating evidence, and some examining boards did not take kindly to being so treated. J.A.Petch, who as secretary of a large examining board was privy to these events, later commented, "The circumstances in which the Norwood Report was published could serve as a perfect example of that departmental procedure which to the uninitiated seems like official chicanery." He described how the Secondary Schools Examination Council was treated. Members were summoned to a two-day meeting in November 1943 with the Norwood Report as the only substantial item on the agenda. "On assembly the members were bluntly informed that their part was to receive and not to question; when it began to appear that considerably comment was likely, the chairman unceremoniously dismissed them after only two hours." They did not meet again until after the war.[88] But reactions such as Petch's were largely private at the time, so that publicly the report helped the Board in its plans. At last there seemed to be some philosophical even psychological support for a tripartite organisation of secondary education. Not only that, but it came from an apparently independent group of educationists. Norwood had served the Board well.

Members of Parliament were not entirely gullible and Spens, whose position had been undermined to make way for Norwood,[89] did not lack friends in the House, for questions were asked in the Spring

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88 J.A.Petch, Fifty Years of Examining. The Joint Matriculation Board, 1903-1953, London 1953, p.165

89 Supra pp.116-120

and Summer of 1943 about the Board's Consultative Committee of which he was chairman. In April Graham-Little asked Butler about the membership of the Consultative Commitee, and he was told that the members' periods of office had expired and that the Committee was "in abeyance during the war" - a strange state of affairs when major legislation was being planned and there was apparently a need for advice on many of those matters which were the very subject of the committee's last report, and some of which were now covered again by Norwood.[90] The contrast between the government's treatment of the English and Welsh Consultative Committee and that of the Scottish Advisory Council on Education was marked. Percival Sharp, the local authorities' spokesman, noted in his weekly comment in Education that, "In this period of educational ferment the Consultative Committee has been put to sleep. The Council Chamber is empty and derelict. Things are different in Scotland." He went on to describe the Scottish Advisory Council, noting especially its representative composition and its authority to initiate its own studies. It was "a parliament on education."[91] The point was emphasized when the Secretary of State for Scotland referred to the reconstitution of the Scottish body and to its present remits in the week before the White Paper debate.[92] The day before the White Paper debate began Lipson asked for the names of the Consultative Committee members and asked how often it had met since the beginning of the war.[93] Perhaps to forestall criticism of the Consultative Committee's disappearance, which by implication was an attack on Norwood, Butler paid tribute to Spens, some of whose recommendations were in fact to be given effect by the forthcoming legislation, at the opening of his White Paper speech. In January 1944 Graham-Little was still asking his question and still receiving the same answer.[94]

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90 H.C.Debates,vol.388,col.1070,13.4.43
91 Education,8.1.43,p.17
92 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.933,21.7.43
93 Ibid.,col.1593,28.7.43
94 H.C.Debates,vol.396,col.698,26.1.44

Lord Fleming's committee could not be handled with as much aplomb as had been Norwood's. Butler might be considered to have misled the Commons in his references to Fleming. A week before the publication of the White Paper Lindsay asked Butler whether he expected before the end of the year reports from Norwood, McNair and Fleming. In a Commons written reply Butler said that he had no news on Fleming.[95] This was not true. He still awaited the final report, but he had received an interim report. Although the committee had been divided, a majority had recommended the abolition of fees in all direct grant schools, except a small number which might have to become private schools, and also the end of direct grant status for schools which were in practice local grammar schools. Butler had received this information at his own behest. It was less than open of him to say that he had to await Fleming. He knew, as Parliament did not, that he had sought guidance and received it three months before the publication of the White Paper.

In his White Paper speech Butler repeated the deception, claiming that consideration of the direct grant school question must await the publication of the Fleming Report. The main Labour spokesman had obviously heard of the interim report, not surprisingly since G.D.H.Cole and Harold Clay were signatories of it. In spite of Butler's observation Creech-Jones asked whether the government had received any report. He understood that a definite recommendation had been made that such schools receiving public money should be free. He asked that this report should be given to the House and its recommendation put into effect.[96] This was a direct challenge which could not be ignored. In his reply to the debate the next day Ede could not avoid taking up the question. He revealed that a special report dealing with the question of fees for direct grant schools

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95 Ibid.,col.2279,8.7.43
96 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.1853,29.7.43

would be published in August. In a disarming way he said that everyone would agree with the decision to publish before the recess, so that they would not deprive themselves of its guidance. He asked M.PS. "who have been rather suspicious as to what we are going to do in regard to the direct grant schools to wait until they have seen the recommendations in this report."[97] The implication for Labour M.Ps. who had knowledge of the Fleming Committee's recommendation was not only that their knowledge was confirmed but also that the government intended to accept the recommendation. This was as misleading as Butler's pronouncements on the matter. It seems likely that there had been no intention to publish at this stage until Creech-Jones had revealed his knowledge of the special report. Butler would not have given his reply to Lindsay on 8 July, have made the same point in the White Paper itself on 16 July and have repeated it in his Commons speech on 29 July, if he was about to publish the recommendation which he had received in April. There was no problem, other than Butler's political dilemma, in publication. The Special Fleming Report had been on Butler's desk before the Norwood Report and there were no constitutional proprieties to be observed before its publication, such as were abnormally set aside in the case of Norwood. Publication seems to have been forced upon the Board by Creech-Jones' revelation and question. Even Ede's undertaking now was ambiguous. He gave the impression that M.Ps. would have it before leaving for the summer recess, yet it was not published until 27 August. Thus it could not provoke immediate parliamentary debate.

This chicken came home to roost in October when Butler was asked by Lindsay when he had received it and why he had not published it earlier. Butler admitted that he had had it in April but said that

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97 Ibid.,col.2043,30.7.43

it was concerned "almost exclusively" with a problem, the consideration of which, it had been explained in paragraph 32 of the White Paper, had been postponed for the present.[98] This was a curious reply. The paragraph cited by Butler explained that some of the schools were an integral part of the local secondary school provision whereas others served no local purpose. It was not yet possible to reach a decision about the schools as a class. As some of them fell within Fleming's terms of reference consideration of their future would have to be postponed.[99] The White Paper left its readers with the clear impression that Fleming was holding up a decision on the matter. Butler was fortunate that Lindsay did not press the point, for it was obvious that it was the recommendation of the Fleming majority report and the difficulties within his own party which these presented for Butler which had caused consideration of the matter to be deferred, rather than the deferment which had obviated the need to publish the report. It was a neat trick and Butler got away with it.

Some M.Ps. who took a keen interest in educational matters suspected that these reports were being used by the Board to promote its own goals, and that the reports were published or suppressed in accordance with that criterion, but the inhibiting effect of consensus prevented them from pressing the point. Lipson, for example, obviously knew that the Consultative Committee had not met in the last two years and he was making a point rather than asking a question, but he does not seem to have taken the matter any further. Graham-Little did not need to ask the same question twice; again he was making a point, but did not press it. Similarly Lindsay's question about the concealment of the Special Fleming Report until after the White Paper debate was not followed up. The belief

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98 H.C.Debates,vol.392,col.1510,21.10.43
99 White Paper,p.10

existed that the future of educational reform was still in the balance and nobody wished unduly to embarrass Butler. The prompt and convenient publication of Norwood, the delay in the publication of Fleming's interim report and the demise of Spens all illustrate the Board's attitudes to its advisory committees and the purposes which they were intended to serve.

It will be recalled that in Holmes' view a scheme of reform should be formulated in detail before presentation to Parliament when the public at large could influence it through their elected representatives. Until that stage was reached he had resisted public discussion of the proposals. He argued always for secrecy and for private consultation with those professionally or managerially involved in education rather than for public debate. That did not, of course, prevent public debate, some of which influenced the Board's thinking; but until a comprehensive scheme, which hung together and could be defended as representing a consensus of those engaged in education, could be presented, Holmes did not want any party political involvement in the process. The White Paper represented, in Holmes' scheme of things, the time for public debate. Butler had at first resisted Holmes' view of consultation,[100] but by 1943 he seems to have succumbed to his Secretary's view. He had indicated in September 1941 that a copy of the Green book would be placed in the Commons library, but it had not in fact been so deposited. In April 1943 Butler was asked about the Green Book and he had to stonewall. He explained that its purpose had been to help the Board's officers in "preliminary discussions" with representatives of the education service, and that it had fulfilled that purpose. It was in any case out of print and would not be reprinted. He was asked repeatedly by three M.Ps. if he would make a copy available to the House, since members were constantly having it quoted at them. He

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100 <u>Supra</u> p. 56

resisted all such requests, arguing that it would not now serve a useful purpose. M.Ps. should await "a rather more developed scheme."[101] He obviously had his projected White Paper in mind. But by the time that was available, the drafting of the Bill itself was at an advanced stage. At its meeting on 13 July the cabinet had not only a draft White Paper but galleys from the prints of the Bill itself. Holmes' view was constitutionally correct, for M.Ps. could of course alter the Bill as they wished, but to suggest that there was much scope for an open discussion by them of the principle issues was to overstate the role allotted to them in the preparation of the reforms. No doubt sensing this, Rhys Davies, Labour M.P. for Westhoughton, got up on 16 July, when Anthony Eden was answering a question about a debate on the White Paper which Butler had just presented, and asked whether the debate would aim to establish a consensus of the House, so that the Bill would be based on that, or whether the Bill was already drafted. Eden's reply that, "It would not be true to say that the legislation is already in draft," did not reflect the true state of affairs.[102] Although the first part of Rhys Davies' question was not answered, Eden's reply might have given him the impression that the answer was in the affirmative. In presenting the White Paper, Butler referred to past discussions between the Board and other bodies, and announced that they had now reached the stage for "the public examination of the plan."[103] This echoed a phrase of Holmes' and also his own statement of early July when he had said that, "There had been a long period of private discussion. Now there must be time for public consideration."[104] Butler had come to accept his view of the nature of the public debate on the proposed legislation. The reply of Eden and the comment of Butler seem to have led Greenwood to believe that a new and more

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101 H.C.Debates,vol.388,cols.790-791,8.4.43
102 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.541,16.7.43
103 Ibid.,col.540,16.7.43
104 As reported in Times,3.7.43,p.2

democratic procedure was being initiated. In his contribution to the White Paper debate he described it as "this new technique" and thought that the purpose of the two-day debate was for everybody to think aloud about a "White Paper committing nobody to anything, to be followed, if the government are wise, by legislation which takes account of what has been said in the House" and that it would be followed by a period of public discussion "before the Bill is finally produced."[105] In a sense he was right, for progress to a Bill depended on a measure of agreement, but it was a misreading of the situation. Any attempt to change significant features of the proposed legislation might jeopardise the prospects for a Bill, especially if it concerned church schools, so that the test was not the forthrightness of debate but the acquiescence of the country in what had already been decided.

The timing of the debate ensured that it passed off with the minimum opportunity for dissent in Parliament. Butler wanted publication before the recess because he was anxious about maintaining the measure of consensus already achieved without some indication of the government's intentions to increasingly restless reformers. The White Paper appeared in mid-July, being unveiled to a thinly-attended House on the first Friday sitting for more than three years. A fortnight later it was debated for two days in the Commons. At the opening of the debate Butler gave a broad hint that it would come to nothing if dissent were widespread. The debate was held on the Thursday and Friday before the August Bank Holiday weekend which, in spite of the war, was celebrated by a rush to the coast. The Commons returned to work on Tuesday, but went into recess at the end of that week, not returning for seven weeks. The timing of the debate could not stimulate a lively parliamentary discussion of the proposed reforms. From the Board's point of view their ship was no longer

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105 H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.1937,30.7.43

in danger of foundering and fair winds were carrying it safely towards harbour.

Chapter 10: REMAINING PROBLEMS: direct grant schools, questions of strategy, N.A.L.T.'s view

With the White Paper published and debated the Board's plan had passed an important stage. Legislation was a certainty unless some major church school problem arose, which now seemed less likely. After catching their breath during the holiday season the Board's critics now prepared more considered objections to its proposals. Chief amongst these was the remaining uncertainty about the direct grant schools. Public discussion of this matter had been avoided at the White Paper stage, but Creech-Jones' question in the debate ensured that the interim Fleming Report had to be published. This itself brought the matter to the fore. The wider public school issue was not, from the Board's point of view, an outstanding matter; for Holmes as a matter of principle and for Butler as a matter of tactics the public schools were not involved in legislation which had a bearing only on the state education system.[1] The direct grant schools, however, were a different matter. They linked the private and the state school systems.

The interim Fleming Report, although representing the views of only a majority on the committee and not its chairman, nonetheless had great authority. After its publication the issue of fees in secondary schools was clarified in most people's minds. As the Times Educational Supplement explained, there was now only one matter to be decided. As fees could not be introduced in modern schools, they had to be abolished in all county and voluntary schools, and it followed that they must also be abolished in those direct grant schools which were local grammar schools. Only the future of direct grant schools which took pupils from outside their areas remained to be decided.[2] The force of this argument was self-evident. As the Manchester Guardian commented, "The arguments by which that proposal

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1 The exception to this view was the decision that private schools should be inspected by the Board.

2 Times Educational Supplement, 11.9.43, p.437

[i.e. the abolition of fees in direct grant schools] is supported are not easily answered. Their authors have rendered an important service to education by the force and persuasiveness with which they have stated them. It only remains for the government which has sought the advice of the committee, to be prompt in acting on it."[3] The Times was similarly emphatic. It observed that the White Paper's proposal for the unification of secondary education precluded the abolition of fees in some secondary schools and their retention in others. Once the decision to promise secondary education for all children was taken, it became an obligation not a privilege and must be free. It had to be "equally accessible" to all children. "The logic is irreproachable," stated the Times, concluding, "To the main question, that of the terms on which universal obligatory secondary education shall be offered, the Fleming Committee seems to have given the right and inevitable answer."[4]

The future of these schools was still undecided because they presented Butler with a party problem. As in all things concerned with secondary education, G.G.Williams was a major influence, but on this occasion he suffered his only defeat on a matter of policy. The explanation is that this was one of the few questions when the decision was party political. Williams wanted grammar schools to be more rigorously selective academically and held no brief for those who wanted to maintain the socially-selective nature of these schools. The interim Fleming Report's recommendations satisfied his objective. He was content that local direct grant schools should become the free grammar school element in the tripartite system. Those which served no local purpose would be protected by the special arrangement envisaged by the Fleming majority. Butler was also well disposed to this proposal but, as we have seen, lacked confidence in his ability to carry it in cabinet and Parliament, and decided therefore

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3 Manchester Guardian,27.8.43,p.4
4 Times,27.8.43,p.7

to suppress it, publishing the report only when directly challenged by the main Labour speaker in the White Paper debate. In the Autumn Williams tried to win over the headmasters of the direct grant schools whilst Butler attempted to mollify Conservative M.Ps.

Williams' meetings with the headmasters were a consequence of Butler's having met the Headmasters' Conference. Those members of the Conference whose schools were direct grant asked for another meeting with Butler, who pleaded a full diary and passed them over to Williams. The head of Secondary Branch as always seized the opportunity. Inviting the H.M.C.'s direct grant schools committee to meet him, he sent them all a background paper in which he observed that, "On the question of tuition fees in direct grant schools, while the need for complete abolition may not be accepted, there is a very widespread conviction that admission to all vacancies in schools recognised for grant from public funds should be accessible to all, irrespective of class or income."[5]

A prompt and hostile response arrived at the Board in advance of the projected meeting. It came from Crichton-Miller, the headmaster of Taunton School, who argued the case of those parents - "a section of the middle class...not at present very strongly protected by any political party" - who had previously been able to afford something which in his view was better than the general state provision even if they could not afford to buy a place at a public school. He wanted the Board to adopt the general principle of supporting by direct grant those projects which were of value to the community, efficient and short of funds.[6] This was a notion which had already been promoted by Barrow in the Norwood Committee, and it had been rejected firmly by Williams.[7] Williams was now as quick off the mark in rejecting this re-emergence of the notion that the direct grant could be retained under the guise of Board patronage of worthy institutions, although his

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5 P.R.O.Ed136/424, Williams to all members of H.M.C.Direct Grant Committee, 21.10.43

6 Ibid., Crichton-Miller to Williams, 25.10.43

7 Supra pp.161-163

rejection was less direct than when he had been addressing one of the Board's inspectors. He had earlier regarded the direct grant as the point to be defended at all cost and his view was unchanged. The abolition of fees was essential in order to render the direct grant defensible. This view was now put to Crichton-Miller. He saw "no objection" to the idea of Board patronage through a direct grant, but nonetheless he stood by the view that, "In the future we cannot admit the principle that a parent can buy an education for his child at fees which are less than the full cost (because of public grants) to the possible exclusion of poorer but equally well qualified children." If the direct grant school had "something superior to offer...it should be accessible to all." If it did not, a parent was paying merely for its exclusiveness, "hardly a sound reason within the public system." Williams went on to propose two avenues which the direct grant schools could follow; some should become free schools, whilst others should have all "special places" in the existing sense, i.e. all of their pupils could qualify for remission of fees according to their parents' income.[8] Although he did not elaborate his schemes, his intention was clearly that the first path should be trodden by the local direct grant schools which were needed as the grammar element in the tripartite system, whilst the second path should be taken by the direct grant boarding schools. Crichton-Miller was converted. The day after the meeting he sent a note to Williams describing the scheme as "quite first class and exactly on the right lines." A new class of "State Public Schools" would be created.[9]

If the other headmasters had been similarly impressed Williams would have won. But the confident predictions of Crichton-Miller, who had had to leave the meeting early, that Williams' scheme will

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8 P.R.O.Ed136/424,Additional Note from Williams to all members of the committee;undated but precedes meeting on 27.10.43 and was in response to a letter dated 25.10.43

9 Ibid.,Crichton-Miller to Williams,28.10.43

"not have a hostile reception if the matter goes further" and that some independent schools might wish to become direct grant on these terms, were ill-founded. The general reaction of the headmasters was to stand by the status quo, fees as well as a direct relationship with the Board.[10] Crichton-Miller's role in this question was similar to that of Spencer Leeson in the question of the public schools. Both of them believed that they were living in radical times and that their fellows should adopt the conservative strategy of accepting some change in order to preserve their essential rights, in the one case independence from local authorities and in the other complete independence. By the end of the year Crichton-Miller had his back to the wall. His fellow heads were solidly behind a defence of their present arrangements with the Board. Crichton-Miller admitted that he was "at variance with the committee in believing that there is great value in continuing the discussions on the basis of the suggestions Mr.Williams has put forward."[11] The dialogue between Williams and the direct grant school headmasters was over, and the Board knew that any attempt to abolish fees in local direct grant schools would be opposed by the schools.

The Conservative Party's own committee on educational policy also represented a problem for Butler. Ironically it was Butler, charged with the organisation of the Central Committee on Post-War Problems, who had decided to establish a Sub-Committee on Education.[12] That was before his own appointment to the Board. Now the sub-committee which he had created was proving troublesome to him. Chaired by Geoffrey Faber, the publisher, its views coincided with those of the minority in the interim Fleming Report.[13] Its opinion was expressed in its third report, Looking Ahead, when it defended parents' rights to choose the kind of education they wanted for their children, and added, "So far as we are concerned, this is a vital

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10 Ibid.,Williams to Goodfellow,6.11.43,attaching a minute of the meeting on 27.10.43

11 Ibid.,Crichton-Miller to Williams,28.12.43,enclosing Memorandum: Direct Grant Schools and the Future,which he had sent to other members of the committee

12 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Butler to Ramsbotham,12.7.41

13 D.W.Dean,'Problems of the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education, 1941-1945',Journal of Educational Administration and History, vol.III,no.1,December 1970,p.34

position that nothing would persuade us to abandon."[14]

Meanwhile Butler was making no more headway with those Conservative M.Ps. who had direct grant schools in their constituencies. On 23 September Kenneth Pickthorne, Henry Brooke and Henry Willink met Butler at the last's request. A few days before this meeting the indefatigable and ubiquitous Williams "happened to meet" Willink who had been elected to the Commons in 1940 and was now Minister of Health. In a report to Butler[15] he conceded that Whitgift School, in Willink's constituency of North Croydon, was an example of a school where the abolition of fees was difficult to justify. Eight hundred pupils, 75% of whom came from outside the area and many a considerable distance, paid £30; in return for its direct grant the school was required to admit 10% of pupils free. But Williams was also able to record that Willink had "reluctantly" agreed to the abolition of some fees, although he favoured the retention of about 150 fee-paying direct grant schools. Williams, in his conversation with Willink and his recommendation to Butler firmly supported the views of the majority Fleming Report. His preferred way forward was to emphasize paragraph 52 of that report which allowed special treatment for some schools where the abolition of fees was difficult to justify. By hinting that this way out might be used by more than the small number of schools intended by the report's authors, he hoped to defend their main proposal. Williams' basic position was unchanged. "I remain clear," he wrote to Butler, "that the Majority Report is the right one." The I.A.H.M. principle that fees should be retained in all existing state-supported secondary schools or abolished in all of them was called in to support his position as was the recent Nuffield Report signed by the knights Cyril Bailey, Cyril Norwood and

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14 Conservative Party, Looking Ahead: the Statutory Education System, London 1944, p.20

15 P.R.O.Ed136/428, Williams to Holmes and Butler, 17.9.43

Richard Livingstone, all of whom had public school backgrounds.[16] But Williams was equally sure that he had not changed Willink's position, admitting "I do not think that I succeeded in the least in convincing Mr.Willink." Before the meeting with the M.Ps. Williams gave Butler a copy of his paper arguing for the distinction to be made between free local direct grant schools and the larger non-local boarding schools which would offer all of their places on the basis of pupils being entitled to remission of fees in accordance with parental income, the deficit being made up by the Board as grant. The only variant on his earlier statements was that he expected some free local pupils to attend the latter at the expense of the local authorities.[17]

At the meeting it became clear that Willink's objections were fundamental. He disliked not only the White Paper's acceptance of the view that ability not parental income should determine a child's admission to a school, but also its view that the different types of secondary education should enjoy equal standing. This was water under the bridge and Butler had no intention of abandoning the statement of such objectives, even if the proposals to be embodied in legislation might not fulfil the hopes thus evoked. Williams again outlined his scheme for direct grant schools with all places "special" in the sense of being subject to remission of fees and therefore not so clearly open to the objection that poor children were excluded. By now the idea "appeared to find some favour."[18]

Nothing definite was said to the M.Ps., but the next stage in Butler's strategy was by now clear. Firstly Williams' proposal about 100% special place arrangements for the non-local boarding direct grant schools was accepted by Butler and could be justified within the terms of the majority Fleming Report by reference to the loophole about schools in which the retention of fees was difficult to criticise. The number might be larger than that intended by the

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16 Nuffield College, The Open Door in Secondary Education, London 1943. All of course were educated at public schools; Bailey was a governor of two public schools and a member of the Council of Marlborough College - Butler's and Norwood's school; Livingstone, now President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, had taught briefly at Eton during the First World War

17 P.R.O.Ed136/428, Williams to Goodfellow, 21.9.43

majority report signatories, but that was a question for the future and need not cause much difficulty at this stage. This position was not specifically endorsed by Butler until the middle of the Committee stage of the Bill in the Commons,[19] but the hope of a solution which would not greatly affect the schools dearest to the hearts of M.Ps. would be sufficient to keep them at bay. Secondly Butler portrayed himself as the holder of the ring, letting the M.Ps. into the secret that, whilst he would not ignore the view of majority report signatories such as Sir James Aitken, Chairman of Lancashire Education Committee, he had personally encouraged Geoffrey Fisher, Bishop of London and leader of the Governing Bodies Association, to express his views in the minority report.[20] Thirdly, the fact that the final Fleming Report was still awaited was used as the reason for not taking a final decision on this matter, even though the interim report had been sought by Butler specifically to assist in the reaching of a decision which could be embodied in legislation. When Williams had first seen Willink he had reported to Butler their agreement that no policy could be settled until the final Fleming Report was received. Butler had circled this comment and endorsed it as a "most important statement".[21] The straw was clutched with gratitude.

Whilst Butler had a strategy for avoiding trouble with the direct grant schools themselves and their supporters in his own party, there remained the difficulty that in this matter he was resisting a policy which, if not universally supported, certainly enjoyed very widespread support. We have already noted the cleavage between local authority and parliamentary Conservatives with most of the former seeking the abolition of fees in local direct grant schools. This policy was also supported by those schoolmasters most actively engaged in secondary education - members of the A.M.A. and I.A.H.M., the male quarters of the "Joint Four" secondary teachers' associations.[22]

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19 Ibid.,Williams to Butler,24.3.44;Williams' notes were endorsed by Butler as being "on sound lines."

20 The Governing Bodies Association had been set up at a meeting in Grocers' Hall in July 1941.Fisher chaired the committee which drafted its constitution and he was the Association's first chairman. P.H.J.H.Gosden,Education in the Second World War,London 1976,p.338

21 P.R.O.Ed136/428,Endorsement by Butler on Williams to Holmes and Butler,17.9.43

22 Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters,Memorandum on the Education Bill,London 1944,p.8;P.R.O.Ed136/470,Taylor (Sec. of I.A.H.M.) to Butler,10.1.44

The wish of the local authority associations to end fees in these schools was made clear to Ede and Butler in August.[23] A Fabian booklet, whilst regretting the intention to keep governors' places, accepted the main recommendations of the majority Fleming Report as the best obtainable.[24] Shena Simon argued closely the case for democratic local authority control of all schools, and specifically the direct grant schools.[25] The T.U.C. demanded the abolition of fees in all types of direct grant schools.[26] Butler himself even went so far as to recommend to Roman Catholics the advantages to them of allowing their direct grant schools to become aided.[27] A problem for Butler was that, if pressure to abolish fees were not decreased by his delaying tactic but were on the contrary increased, the consensus argument could lead to the isolation of those in his party who wanted to keep the status quo. It was a very difficult party question for Butler and, whilst it had its dangers, putting off a decision held great attractions for him.

In this matter the attitude of Ede was again important. The Labour Party was the obvious spearhead of any movement to press the point. Unlike multilateralism, this was not a matter in which leading party spokesmen had recently undergone conversions. It was a longstanding party objective. The attitude of its spokesman inside the Board was of obvious importance. Ede favoured the abolition of fees in local direct grant schools but was willing to help Butler with his political problem. A month before the publication of the White Paper, Butler had written to Holmes about the direct grant school question and instructed him to keep Ede informed on the matter. "He was anxious to be helpful about the secondary problem," wrote Butler about Ede, adding, "You know my desire to keep him informed and [I] know you will do this in the right way."[28] Ede was thus not likely to be the instrument by which the Labour Party would be advised to gird its loins and even less the warrior to lead

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23 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Note of Interview.Association of Education Co mmittees' deputation,11.8.43

24 G.G.Leybourne,A New Charter for Education,London 1943,pp.35-36

25 S.D.Simon,The Four Freedoms in Secondary Education,Bickley,Kent, undated but presumed to be early 1944 since she referred to the Education Bill

26 T.U.C.Ed.C10/144.43,11.8.43,Statement on the White Paper,p.2

27 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Butler to Archbishop of Liverpool,27.9.43

28 P.R.O.Ed136/389,Butler to Holmes,16.5.43

it into battle.

The question of the direct grant schools apart, most sections of the Labour Party saw the battle as largely over by the Autumn of 1943. Anxieties expressed in the White Paper debate dominated Labour thoughts. Foremost amongst these was that, without a shorter and more definite timetable, the much-discussed reforms might never materialise. A specific commitment to a leaving age of 16 as an essential part of the arrangements to achieve parity between the different elements in secondary education was the main demand which the Labour movement made and which was likely to lead to a breach between itself and the Board and therefore the coalition government. Bevin was still pressing for 16 as the leaving age, but seemed to think that it was catered for within the Board's plans and would be implemented by political, administrative and trade union rather than legislative action. "The government were agreed there had to be a raising of the leaving age," he was reported as telling the T.U.C. conference in September. "The trade unions should begin now to compel the government to keep its word. Every new agreement they concluded should be based on the assumption that the school age was to be raised and continued education provided, and that industry had got to adjust itself. That was the way to see the reforms were woven into hours of labour, time off, and all the rest of it." Clay took the commoner view that a legislative commitment to 16 was "of fundamental importance."[29] Most of the remaining questions were regarded as matters for the legislative wing of the party. The Education Reconstruction Sub-Committee saw no need to meet again until the Bill was published, seeming to take the view that it had done its job in formulating party policy, of which the Parliamentary Labour Party was now the custodian.

The question of strategy was still important. It has been

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29 Reported in the Times,7.9.43,p.2 and 8.9.43,p.8

suggested that by the Autumn of 1943 Labour critics had adopted the role of "sympathetic allies of the government who were concerned solely that the provisions of the Bill would be put into effect with speed and vigour."[30] To the extent that Labour supported Butler and the Board in carrying legislation against the forces which could defeat it and in the sense that a consensus on reforms had all along been the basis for legislating, that view is correct. There was a widely-held view that a rocked boat could still founder. This interpretation, by suggesting that Labour's role was that of uncritical supporter of the government, overlooks both the consensus aspect of educational reform at this time and the vulnerability of the Labour Party to schism on the church school question.

That Labour spokesmen criticised rather than condemned the government's legislative plans is not evidence that they had abandoned their principles. Their dilemma was acute. They believed that by pressing for more they might lose all. At some stages ill-served by their own man at the Board, although they knew not to what extent, Labour educationists were now dependent for further progress on their parliamentary spokesmen. Most of these had shown by their comments on the White Paper that they favoured multilateral schools as much as did the party's extra-parliamentary wings. But there was the problem of the M.Ps. who were Roman Catholics first and Labour Party members second. Butler would not have progressed as far as he had with his legislative plans if he had not been satisfied and had not convinced the cabinet that the Roman Catholic agitation in the country could be contained. Throughout the Autumn Butler watched the situation closely and anxiously. Late in September he spent a week seeking reactions to the White Paper from M.Ps. Labour spokesmen were unanimous in wanting early legislation for two reasons: once the religious issue had been raised the sooner it was settled and closed again the better,

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30 R.Barker, Education and Politics 1900-1951, Oxford 1972, p.97

and the political situation, i.e. the war-inspired consensus, was expected to deteriorate as M.Ps. became more confident of victory against Germany. Cove, Greenwood and Denman, who had spoken for Labour in the White Paper debate, all took this view. Butler was impressed with the fortitude of M.Ps. who were being deluged with letters. "Members appear to be standing up to this very well," he noted with relief. Two Liverpool M.Ps. one Labour the other Conservative, were refusing public meetings, in order to avoid being drawn on the matter. Other Labour M.Ps., including Muff, the member for Hull, wanted to increase the 50% share to be contributed by the state to the cost of building new Roman Cathlic schools, but Butler noted his reluctance to embarrass the government.[31] One helpful factor was a division in the Catholic ranks. The day after recording the reaction of M.Ps. Butler had to report to the Lord President's Committee the advice of the Pope to his British flock that they should "stand out" for more money. He was relieved to record also that the English Catholics did not like this direction from Rome and were split in their ranks over whether to continue the agitation.[32] Here were grounds for hope, but success was not yet assured. In October newspapers carried the defiant statement of the Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr.Downey to a Roman Catholic "education demonstration" in Liverpool Stadium, that, "We shall never cede our schools or retire from the educational field."[33] There was, of course, no government proposal that they should do so, but the statement showed the strength of Roman Catholic feeling as did a march of Catholic women in East London in a procession more than a mile and a half long.[34] The Labour problem was well-expressed in the T.U.C. statement on the White Paper thus, "The General Council maintain their view that if denominational bodies wish to have their own

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31 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Confidential note by Butler,23.9.43
32 Ibid.,Private note,24.9.43
33 Times Educational Supplement,23.10.43,p.510
34 Daily Herald,18.10.43,p.2

schools, they might well be expected to pay for them. They do not wish, however, that this ancient controversy should be allowed to wreck or retard the promise of educational advance on a wide front, which the White Paper offers."[35] An M.P., George Griffiths, seconding the address on the King's Speech in November 1943 summed up the general feeling. Referring to Butler's discussions "behind the scenes", he trusted that the President would "stand pat by the White Paper."[36] That epitomised the widespread view that all who wanted reform should rally to the government's published intentions.

Another problem for the party in the Commons was that many of its members were not well-informed on educational matters. A small example of the ease with which some of them could be detached from the party's egalitarian outlook had occurred earlier in the year when a group of eleven Labour M.Ps. led by Muff had accepted an invitation to visit several public schools and had expressed their appreciation in a correspondence in the Times and in their contributions to the White Paper debate. Whilst it is true that on this aspect of policy the Labour Party was at its most vague, this little episode - dubbed "Muff's circus" - demonstrated the superficial appreciation, by some M.Ps. who were not especially interested in education, of the Tawney-inspired principle that education should be available irrespective of parental income, let alone the more radical notion of multilateralism.[37] Interestingly Ede congratulated Muff on having the courage to write his letter.[38]

The Parliamentary Labour Party had its weaknesses as the instrument by which Labour's remaining expectations of educational reform were to be fulfilled. The difficulty of opposing what seemed to be a widely acclaimed series of reforms, the danger of dividing a movement which seemed to have evolved a consensus, the

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35 T.U.C.EdC10/144.43,11.8.43,Statement on the White Paper,p.2
36 H.C.Debates,vol.395,col.20,24.11.43
37 The correspondence in the Times was started by a letter from Muff on 8.7.43 and was prominent in its columns throughout July.It was Guy,M.P.for Poplar South,who expressed his admiration for the schools in the Commons,and Mack,M.P.for Newcastle-under-Lyme,who publicised the label "Muff's circus". H.C.Debates,vol.391,col.1896,29.7.43 and col.1982,30.7.43
38 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,8.7.43

particular problem of the Labour Party's Roman Catholic supporters and the weakness of the parliamentary party as an instrument for change in education were all factors which inhibited Labour's educational leaders both in and out of Parliament and made them wary of making a full-blooded demand for Labour's objectives. Their political opponent, Butler, was in addition difficult to attack, for he claimed to share many of their objectives, having to temper his enthusiasm only because he knew the practical problems better than they did. The fact that the political circumstances were unpropitious for Labour and posed a strategic question of whether to compromise or to campaign for victory whatever the risks should not lead us to assume that the Labour Party had changed its mind on the policies of egalitarianism and multilateralism in secondary education.

There was one exception to the general party strategy of criticising aspects of the reforms, whilst endorsing them in general and supporting their authors; that was N.A.L.T.[39] Even N.A.L.T. did not adopt a hostile attitude without misgivings and dissension, such was felt to be the frailty of the movement for educational reform. The uniformly hostile reaction of Denington and Cove in the Bulletin evoked some criticism at the September executive committee meeting, and an unsuccessful move was made to have articles signed as personal contributions. The view of some members that "too critical an attitude should not be adopted" was recorded, and the treasurer, not Denington or Cove, was charged to draw up a statement on the White Paper. An outline was agreed at the meeting. One contradictory sentence illustrated the dilemma of Labour spokesmen. "The modern school must not become a dead end and the multilateral school must be stressed as

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39 As the records of N.A.L.T.have become available only recently, its views have been summarised in some detail in the present work.

the only democratic solution," agreed N.A.L.T.'s executive.[40] Their need was both to ensure that the part of the undesirable tripartite system which had previously been attended mainly by working class children would develop into something better, and to emphasize their rejection of the tripartite system. Their attack had to encompass improvements in a policy which they considered to be fundamentally wrong but which may well come into being, and the advocacy of their own alternative policy. In fact the preparation of this public statement took so long that it was not ready until the Bill itself was expected, so that it was agreed to delay publication.[41] The views of N.A.L.T. as presented in the Bulletin were condemnatory of the whole scheme, and it was these views which saw the light of day. It was only N.A.L.T. which maintained its critique of the planned legislation throughout the Autumn.

After the White Paper debate Cove and Denington clearly decided that the government's proposals did not go far enough to justify even lukewarm praise. For them the time had come to take off the gloves. The authors of the Bulletin were alarmed that so many teachers were welcoming the White Paper. They denounced Ede, who had not replied to the debate but had given "a characteristic Ede speech of pleasing pleasantries and after-dinner reminiscences."[42] They forecast of Ede that, "He will remain Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education for all time! He is indispensable to the Board. They know it, and he is aware of it. Mr.Butler was highly pleased with his closing speech of the debate. He was interesting, amiable, affable - and withal competent. A good lieutenant." But they also attacked the Labour Party itself for not giving leadership on the question of the dual system. "Where is the policy of the party?" they asked, "Where is its appeal to the nation on this issue? Does it follow Mr.Ede, who follows

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40 G.L.C.,A/NLT/I/2,E.C.meeting 11.9.43

41 Ibid.,E.C.meeting 20.11.43

42 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1V/15/16,Bulletin,August 1943;this was a fair comment and we have seen (supra p.202)that Ede did not reply to important points raised in the debate, pleading shortage of time to those who interrupted him;yet still he took some time to indulge his reminiscences of 1902 and to talk anecdotally about women's institutes

Mr.Butler? Our business is to explain the nature of the White Paper." This was partly the interests of Welsh non-conformity, which wanted an end of church schools, being voiced by Cove. But in general the Bulletin's authors were questioning the party's parliamentary strategy in relation to the White Paper and its fear of a church school controversy. Having read the government's plans with care and having listened to the debates in the Commons and the Lords, they were convinced that the main objectives of the party would not be fulfilled. Yet all around them were welcoming the White Paper as a major reforming document. They were alarmed to see "teachers - indeed teachers of the 'left' variety - tumbling over themselves to welcome the White Paper." At the end of the year they were to look back on this period as one in which "anyone who dared to strip the paper of its promissory verbiage...was immediately dubbed an enemy of educational progress", noting particularly that communist teachers "regarded it as sacrilege to breathe upon its pure white pages."[43] Their response was to urge Labour teachers to obtain copies for themselves. This, they were convinced would itself open their eyes. Seeing themselves as exposers of the truth, they devoted the next few editions of the Bulletin to a relentless critique of the White Paper.

The main argument of this first edition after the publication of the White Paper was that, by making the raising of the leaving age even to 15 dependent on the re-organisation of local authorities and on the re-organisation of all elementary schools, a reform,which was fundamental to the object of equal educational opportunity, was made conditional on the acquiescence of two reactionary groups - the Part III local authorities, which were fighting for their lives, and the churches. Moreover, as far as school re-organisation was concerned, it was only to be after millions of pounds had been spent

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43 Ibid.,/20,Bulletin,December 1943

by the state on building new denominational schools, that raising the leaving age to 16, which was not provided for in the White Paper, was to be considered. It was as though an alleged pre-requisite for reform was being provided, without any commitment being given to carry the reform itself. The Bulletin was particularly hostile to the Anglican church with its thousands of elementary schools in single school areas, i.e. where they were the only schools which all children perforce had to attend, whatever their parents' religion. It attacked the dual system proposal as giving life to the church school system when it was on its knees. Reminding its readers that it was the churches and their inability or unwillingness to find their share of the capital costs which had held up the re-organisation of secondary schools, they bitterly resented the fact that even now the churches were to be given the power to delay the raising of the leaving age.

In the September Bulletin[44] Cove and Denington returned to the same theme. Deeply disturbed that all current debate was about Part III authorities and the church schools, they considered that, "The educational weaknesses of the White Paper are being smothered." Although more a piece of rhetoric than a closely-argued critique, this edition saw a danger that "instead of building roads towards a true democracy we are engaged in erecting bastions for the preservation and defence of the capitalist system", and cited the priority given to continuation schools over the raising of the leaving age as an example. Praise for continued education was "fashionable", but in reality could "stand in the way of securing a real system of secondary education for all." Raising the leaving age would be made more difficult by the erection of "an elaborate system of continuative education from the age of 14 or 15." They stood firmly by their demand for the multilateral school on

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44 Ibid.,/18,Bulletin,September 1943

educational, social and democratic grounds, and pointed out that "under Butler's proposals children will still be sorted out and their careers largely determined at the age of 11, so that the abolition of the scholarship examination achieves only scholastic and not social significance." They pointed out that better junior schools, smaller classes, the abolition of the special place examination and a common code for all secondary schools could be achieved without legislation. All that was needed was "a minister who will demand and a Chancellor of the Exchequer who will grant money." Of all the desirable educational goals, legislation was needed only for nursery schools, the raising of the leaving age, compulsory continued education and the completion of secondary re-organisation. Yet it was on these very matters that the proposed legislative commitments were weakest. The purpose of legislation, it was argued, was really to strengthen religion, in the form both of a greatly-expanded network of denominational schools and of compulsory worship in state schools. Their opinions were summarised thus, "The Butler proposals are essentially reactionary, and only those sections which we oppose have any promise of implementation."

The proposed legislation was also put in a post-war political context.[45] Under a headline, "Democracy frustrated" and with sub-headings such as, "The facade of reation", "The veto of minorities" and "Mr.Churchill's second front", the White Paper proposals were explained in terms of the maximum that was possible in view of Churchill's veto on controversial measures and the obstruction of minority interests which were rigorously pursuing their own special objectives. Churchill's attitude was seen as hypocritical. In the field of foreign policy, it was suggested, he was willing to follow reactionary and controversial policies

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45 Ibid.,/19,Bulletin,October 1943

and to rely on his Conservative majority in the Commons. In September he had rejected Labour fears that, in the wake of Mussolini who had fled to Germany, the allies might impose a government on Italy rather than foster democratic developments, by stating baldly that the government would take its own decision. Having decided, the government "was not going to be put off that action by any fear that perhaps we should not have a complete unanimity on the subject. Parliament does not rest on unanimity; democratic assemblies do not act on unanimity. They act by majorities."[46] It was probably to this statement which the October Bulletin alluded when it suggested to its readers that the consensus, demanded before change could be brought about at home, effectively stopped progress which inevitably involved controversy; whereas when Churchill himself wanted to carry controversial foreign policies, he was unconcerned about consensus and ruthlessly used his majority. N.A.L.T.'s strategy for combating what it saw as the government's strategy was to try to shift the argument from the church school question and to create controversy on the educational issues. "The weakness of the White Paper," complained Cove and Denington, "is that on its educational side it has evoked a sleepy, complacent, uncritical acceptance, and the battle has raged around the dual system."

By October N.A.L.T. was claiming in the Bulletin that its campaign was having an effect. It reported that several delegate conferences of Labour Party, trade union and co-operative representatives had been held, and "a remarkable change has come over these conferences." Members were showing impatience with the Roman Catholic agitation and seemed "eager to take up the challenge."

N.A.L.T.'s own London conference, held at the Conway Hall on 16 October 1943, seems to have been very successful. 261 delegates

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46 H.C.Debates,vol.392,col.96,21.9.43

representing 134 organisations - local Labour Parties, trade unions, trades councils and co-operative guilds - attended. The speakers were Cove and George Thomas. Thomas was a young teacher, a member of the N.U.T. Executive, and a member of N.A.L.T.'s Rhondda Branch. He had met Ede early in the year when the Parliamentary Secretary had visited schools in Tonypandy. Ede's day had finished with a speech at a youth meeting at which Thomas had proposed the vote of thanks. Thomas had joined Ede for supper afterwards and they had had "an interesting talk on post-war reconstruction."[47] For him the White Paper reforms were "too vague" and showed a "blindness to the possibilities of the common man." A common leaving age of 16 was essential in the interests of working class children. He rejected tripartism, claiming that "there would never be equality of status for all children unless they all went to the same kind of school. The only solution was the multilateral or common school to which all children would go." Cove's arguments were similar. As in his Tribune article and Commons speech he put them in the political context of the democratic purposes for which the war was being fought. "The Tories were the best shop window dressers in the world," he was reported as saying. "They made an attractive display that looked progressive, but they never gave away the actualities of power and privilege." Some of the proposals required only administrative action. Those requiring legislation revealed "deep reaction in matters of vital policy," He rejected the notion that equality could be achieved by a common code for three different kinds of school. "The only solution was the multilateral school," he opined. He quoted the Conservative booklet Looking Ahead[48] to demonstrate that increased religious instruction in the form of additional church school places and

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47 B.L.,Ede Diary,vol.7,25.1.43.He was later to become a Labour M.P. and Speaker of the House of Commons.

48 Conservative and Unionist Party,Looking Ahead.Educational Aims,London 1942

compulsory religious instruction in state schools were seen by the Conservatives as a "bulwark against revolutionary changes." His views were well reported in the Sunday Observer and the Daily Herald. The conference ended with the adoption of a resolution which demanded an early bill, "the acceptance of the principle of the establishment of the common school providing a broad highway from the nursery to the university," the end of the dual system and the raising of the leaving age to 16 within three years of the end of the war with Germany.[50]

Evelyn Denington's attack on the White Paper appeared in the New Leader, the weekly publication of the Independent Labour Party, in September.[51] Her headline declared that, "The Butler Bill will entrench reaction." Like Cove, she saw a sinister motive behind the Board's plans, noting especially the desire to reduce the number of children receiving a grammar school education in order to increase the number of able children having an education which would suit them for design and craft jobs in industry. "We have not heard of any proposals for the 'direction' of children from the public schools into industry," she observed. In terms of the Tawney interpretation of secondary schooling she saw this as the preservation of the higher administrative jobs for the public school products to the exclusion of the able working class child. Cove had gone further and had linked this reduction in the number of children who were to receive a grammar school type of education to the reduction in the need for administrative work as the British Empire contracted. Denington proposed specifically that any bill which did not include the raising of the leaving age to 16 within three years of the end of the war with Germany should be rejected. But even this reform would not achieve equality of opportunity. Only the multilateral school could achieve that.

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49 Sunday Observer,17.10.43,p.5;Daily Herald,18.10.43,p.2

50 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1/2,Report of Conference on the Implications of the White Paper on Education,Conway Hall,London,16.10.43; the quotations are all from the report and are therefore in reported speech.

51 New Leader,18.9.43,p.3

As in the Bulletin, there was a strong attack on the proposed church settlement. "Which of the priorities are likely to be operated first?" she asked. Her reply was, "that which will give millions of pounds of public money to the churches." Her final verdict was that, "The White Paper is a cloak for the further entrenchment of reaction and class privilege." N.A.L.T. thus saw the proposed reforms as potentially reactionary, regarded the public acclaim for them as largely misguided, and wanted the Labour Party to demand its price for the passage of legislation.

Meanwhile the Board's officers were resisting any attempts to commit their department more strictly than in the published proposals. Following a meeting on 13 September 1943 to consider drafts of the Bill, one of the officials wrote, "The only definite date in the Bill is that on which the Board becomes a Ministry. All the other dates are fixed by order-in-council and need never materialise." That was of course precisely the Labour fear. The official suggested that "in order to counter the criticisms", definite dates should be fixed for setting up the new local education authorities and "possibly for the raising of the leaving age to 15."[52] Such comments indicated the discrepancy between the Board's intentions, or at least expectations, and the public hopes raised by all the talk of reform.

Holmes was insistent that the Board should not be committed in legislation to fulfil such hopes. Indeed he was still willing to advocate in October 1943 his own order of priorities. He urged Butler to give a higher priority to part-time release for young workers to attend continuation colleges than to raising the leaving age to 15, let alone 16. Thus in 1943, with the White Paper published, the chief official at the Board was still hankering after a leaving age of 14 which had been abandoned in 1936, when the Education Act had

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52 P.R.O.,Ed136/389,Notes on the draft printed on 11.9.43

raised the leaving age to 15. That Act was complicated by the so-called beneficial exemptions and of course it was nullified by the outbreak of war in any case. It is extraordinary, nonetheless, that Holmes should have thought it worthwhile to express such a view when public expectations were so mugh higher than they had been in 1936. He recognised that his own preference might not be politically possible, but wanted there to be no doubt that part-time education for those over 15 was a higher priority than raising the leaving age to 16. His main purpose now was to persuade Butler that "ill-informed pressure to speed up the introduction of the various reforms "should be resisted on the grounds that, if they were introduced under "unworthy conditions", there might be revulsion against reform itself.[53]

The objectives of the Board were suspected by all sections of the Labour Party. These suspicions were expressed in the scepticism of M.Ps. in the White Paper debate and the outright hostility of N.A.L.T. If Labour educationists had been more confident than they were that it was not the Board's intentions to transform the progressive and radical aspirations expressed in the opening of the White Paper into reality, more of them might have decided that a strategy of political division rather than consensus was the right course for them to take. But this was another aspect of their dilemma. It was a matter of judgement whether the Board and its political head were stating their true objectives. There were many in the Labour Party who shared the view of Cove's and Denington's critics in N.A.L.T., and who were reluctant to doubt the sincerity of such an apparently conciliatory political opponent who had rarely opposed Labour's objectives on principle, but had

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53 P.R.O.Ed136/378,Holmes to Butler,22.10.43

seemed beset only by practical difficulties about which his knowledge was inevitably greater than theirs.

Chapter 11:THE BILL

The Bill was presented to Parliament on 15 December 1943, two days before the Christmas recess began. The Second Reading in the Commons took the form of a two-day debate starting on 19 January, the day after Parliament re-assembled. As with the White Paper the timing ensured that few opportunities could arise for questioning the ministers or for discussions amongst M.Ps. outside the chamber. There was still anxiety about the Roman Catholic M.Ps. who by now were openly acting as an inter-party sectarian group. As soon as Butler rose to begin his speech on the Second Reading of the Bill, for example, he was interrupted by two Roman Catholic M.Ps., Tinker and Logan, both of whom were Labour.[1] When a financial resolution was debated a week later one M.P. expressed the gratitude of Roman Catholic members for its loose phrasing which allowed the possibility of increasing the state contribution to Roman Catholic schools; "that augurs well for the future," he declared. Another Roman Catholic member promised that there would be no difficulties in Commitee if the President were to meet Roman Catholic M.Ps. on the financial question "behind the chair", as blatant an offer to conclude a private deal in order to avoid a parliamentary clash as can be imagined.[2] Such was the strength of unity between Roman Catholic members, irrespective of party, that Labour's opening speaker in the Second Reading debate pledged his party's support for Butler in "any struggle he may have against vested interests in the House" and against "enthusiastic sectarian protagonists,"[3] The potential hazards from this quarter necessitated a tight timetable with the minimum scope for controversy. The problem for educational reformers was that the desire to hurry onwards, in order to close this Pandora's box as soon

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1 H.C.Debates,vol.396,col.208,19.1.44
2 Ibid.,vol.396,cols.1075,1081-1082,28.1.44;the M.Ps.were Wing-Commander Grant Ferris and Colonel Arthur Evans
3 Ibid.,vol.396,cols.233-234,19.1.44

as possible, also curtailed discussion on the political and educational aspects of the Bill.

Butler opened and closed his speech on the Second Reading[4] with the consensus argument. The Bill was the result of two years' work by "many active partners in the education service", an attempt to create a synthesis between opposing aspirations, and the fruit of the nation's new-found unity which had been "hammered on the anvil of this war." As in the Bill there was no reference in his speech to the three types of secondary school, but no change had occurred in his intentions or those of his officials. Local authority plans would not be accepted unless they provided for a "variety of instruction", and "the secondary stage will be designed, not only to provide an academic training for a select few, but to give equivalent opportunities to all children over 11, of making the most of their natural aptitudes." It has generally been assumed[5] that, because the reference to the three types of secondary school in the White Paper was not repeated in the Bill, some change of policy had occurred in the meantime. As we have seen,[6] the decision to omit the reference from the Bill had been taken because of drafting difficulties and in order not to ossify local authority secondary school plans for all time in the absence of amending legislation. Moreover it had been taken in February 1943, i.e. long before the publication of the White Paper. The subsequent inclusion of the reference to the three types of school in the White Paper was confirmation that no change had occurred in the Board's intentions for the future pattern of secondary schooling. The fact that the Bill was published five months after the White Paper misled people at the time and has misled us since into thinking that the Bill represented

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4 Ibid.,vol.396,cols.208-233,19.1.44

5 E.g.R.Barker,Education and Politics 1900-1951,Oxford 1972,pp.79-80; Barker states that Labour worked hard to ensure that the White Paper's three types of school did not appear in the Bill,but he was writing without the benefit of having read the Board's papers which at that time were not available.

6 Supra p.132

in this matter a response to the criticism of the White Paper. We now know that the drafting of the important clause in the Bill preceded the publication of the White Paper by several months, and this leads to a quite different interpretation.

By not referring in his Commons speech to three types of secondary school, Butler did not directly raise the question of segregated or multilateral secondary schooling. In his reference to raising the leaving age to 16 he was similarly disarming. "Any educationist would tell you that the arguments for raising the age to 16 are conclusive," he declared, but there were practical difficulties.

On the question of fees in direct grant schools Butler's approach again had the effect of blurring the issue. Boldly declaring that "these schools...must be accessible to all, whatever their financial circumstances," and stating that "it is essential that the local education authority in planning the education for its area should be able to count on places in these schools to the extent required to supplement the provision in the maintained schools," and also warning the governors of such schools that their continuance on the direct grant list would depend upon the views of local authorities as well as on their own wishes, he saw no reason for prohibiting fees in such schools. On the contrary, he saw a danger that, deprived of the right to charge fees and of the independence which the schools regarded as inseparable from that right, some schools might prefer to become independent with the result that places in them would no longer be available to children in the state sector.

In a wireless broadcast[7] the following evening Butler did take up the question of secondary school organisation, but was not specific about the number of branches. He also repeated his vague

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7 P.R.O.Ed136/475,Text of broadcast by R.A.Butler,20.1.44

White Paper statement which purported to show, without going into detail and certainly without revealing where final authority would rest, that the decision about a child's placement in a secondary school would be taken jointly by parents, teachers and the council. "We are offering a varied choice and chance to pupils of different types," he said. "Parents are to be brought into the life of the school more than they have been. You want to have something to say about the sort of secondary school your child may go to after the primary stage. We're not going to arrange this all by examinations, but rather by a system of sorting - rather like the G.P.O. - in which parents, teachers and authorities all come in together."

The Labour Party's Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee had met on 4 January 1944 to consider its response to the Bill. Apart from those who had already contributed to the formulation of party policy - Clay, Franklin, Lady Simon, Spikes, Barbara Drake, Shearman and Tomlinson - two others were present: Ellen Wilkinson and John Parker. The latter's presence was occasioned by his nomination as the main Labour speaker in the coming debate. The M.P. for Romford in Essex, Parker was an unlikely choice as spokesman for the Labour Party on this important occasion. Aged 37 and, like Butler, educated at Marlborough College under the headship of Norwood and then at St.John's College, Oxford (to the Presidency of which Norwood was later to accede), he had not hitherto shown much interest in education. Throughout the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1943 he had spoken frequently in the Commons, but never on education. His party background was as a Fabian; he was general-secretary of the Fabian Research Bureau.

Although the relations between the Labour Party's N.E.C. or its sub-committees and the Parliamentary Labour Party have sometimes

been difficult, on this occasion the committee decided upon its responses to the Bill and the parliamentary spokesmen faithfully voiced them. It was decided that the Bill must clearly be designed to achieve a leaving age of 16, that it should be amended so that it enforced the majority interim Fleming Report's views on fees in direct grant schools, that an official party spokesman should announce Labour's opposition to the dual system but its acceptance of it in the interests of progress provided no further concessions were made, and that there should be parity of status between types of secondary schools. Clay, as chairman, and Morgan Phillips, the research department head, had met Ede and now reported to members their misgivings about his non-commital replies when he had been pressed on the two key legislative questions of the leaving age and fees in direct grant schools. Clay, disappointed by Ede's response on the question of fees, had "left Mr.Ede in no doubt that the matter would be raised in Parliament." They noted that the Bill contained no clause to give legislative force to the White Paper promise of parity between the different types of school. Franklin raised the question of strategy. "If we are defeated on the two main questions of fees and the school leaving age, what is the position of the party?" he asked. He did not receive a direct reply, although the implication, from the agreed assertion that they were criticising a Bill which was welcomed despite these defects, was that the unamended Bill was better than none at all.[8]

Parker's speech in response to Butler's reflected this view.[9] He welcomed the Bill, even seeing it as evidence of the Conservatives' acceptance of progressive ideas. His own stance sought to combine the ideals of both the meritocrat and the democrat. The nation needed to seek and train the most talented for the most responsible jobs,

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8 T.H.,Labour Party Records,R.E.S.-C.Minutes 19,4.1.44;notes give fuller accounts of the views expressed individually by members

9 H.C.Debates,vol.396,cols.233-244,19.1.44

whilst giving a high level of education to everybody else. Apart from a mild attack on the privileges of public schools, his two main criticisms presaged the party divisions to come. Noting that the headteachers of Charterhouse and Roedean had signed the majority interim Fleming Report as evidence of the unradical nature of the proposal to abolish fees in direct grant schools, he regretted the Board's refusal to include these schools in the clause abolishing fees in maintained and voluntary schools. Secondly he wanted a leaving age of 15 in 1945 and 16 in 1948, with prefabricated buildings and the integration of the school building programme with the ten-year housing programme to achieve these dates.

These were the points taken up by other Labour speakers. Muff, who had earlier led a group of Labour M.Ps. on a series of visits to public schools and now took the opportunity to praise them as institutions which it would be a privilege for some working-class children to enter, nonetheless wanted the direct grant schools to become full members of the national schools system. John Wilmot of Kennington noted the anxiety of local authorities which were "much disturbed that the system of direct grants should be continued in the Bill." Ivor Thomas of Keighley voiced Labour's scepticism about the leaving age. Moelwyn Hughes of Carmarthen regarded the failure to abolish fees in direct grant schools as a blot on the Bill and foresaw that in many towns there would be two kinds of grammar school - the "snob" school with fee-payers and the second-grade school without. Lewis Silkin of Peckham was sceptical about the proposed tri-partite organisation of secondary education. "Are we doing anything more than abolishing the terms? Are the schools to remain just the same?", he asked. He wanted to know how the retention of fees in direct grant schools could be justified, since places taken by fee-payers must ipso facto be places which they could not win in

open competition. Greenwood, opening for Labour on the second day of the debate as he had on the second day of the White Paper debate, expressed his concern about the government's intentions on the two matters of the leaving age and the direct grant schools.[10]

When Ede replied to the debate on behalf of the government, the part of his remarks on the educational aspects of the Bill which most excited the House was his reference to direct grant schools.[11] He replied to Labour criticisms on this point by repeating Butler's undertaking that the direct grant schools would have to provide places needed for local schemes thus, "The first charge on direct grant schools is to be the places that are required for filling out of the local education authority's system of education." Moelwyn Hughes interrupted to ask about the basis for the selection of the pupils. Ede replied, "That is a matter between the local education authority and the governors of the schools." His reply evoked a chorus of "Ah" from M.Ps. and the remark, "Most unsatisfactory" from Evelyn Walkden, M.P. for Doncaster. Ede's response was to view the whole question in terms of the evolution of secondary education. Coventry, for example, had all of its boys' secondary education provided in direct grant schools financed by the Board and all of its girls' secondary education in maintained schools financed by local rates, a clearly anomalous situation which must be changed. He reminded the House of Butler's pledge when he had "stated most explicitly that no child is to be debarred from obtaining this or any other form of education for which he is suited and for which the local education authority is responsible by reason of the fact that his parent cannot afford to pay the fee." To this he added the further pledge that the regulations to be made under the Act would ensure that nobody "can buy a place for his child to the exclusion of another child better fitted to profit by the education given in

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10 Ibid.,vol.396,cols.259,269,303,19.1.44;cols.454-455,469-470, 405-411,20.1.44

11 Ibid.,vol.396,cols.484-499,20.1.44

the school." Such pledges did not answer Silkin's point that fee-payers were in direct-grant schools for the very reason that they had not gained a free place in open competition and were therefore bound to be less well-qualified than non-fee payers. The pledges could not be fulfilled by the proposals currently before the Commons. Ede did not deal at all with Labour anxieties about the leaving age.

Whilst every Labour contributor to the educational debate was thus critical or sceptical about the government's intentions on these two points, whilst welcoming the Bill as a whole and wishing to assist its passage, the debate was dominated not by such issues but by the church school question. When Ede began his speech with an apology to the Deputy Speaker lest he should "say a few words about education" and begged that he be not ruled out of order on that account, his irony was fully justified by what had gone before. Speaker after speaker had addressed the House not as Conservative, Labour or Liberal, but as Roman Catholic, Anglican or non-conformist. The clash between Roman Catholic and non-conformist spokesmen was largely, although not exclusively, an internal Labour Party wrangle. Greenwood tried to mitigate the effects of Labour's divisions by reminding his own party that it was composed of people with a wide variety of views on religion and that the Parliamentary Labour Party's standing orders allowed members to speak against the party line on questions of religious belief. The Labour Party accepted that Butler had made "a sincere attempt" to solve the problem. It wanted the Bill to be passed and not to be "wrecked by religious controversy." Therefore, Greenwood informed the Commons that the Labour Party, in spite of the hostility which many of its members felt towards the dual system, would support its continuance "in order that we may obtain the educational developments essential

to a democratic community." This was the statement of principle and of strategy which the Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee had wanted. Nonetheless speaker after speaker rose to address the House solely on the denominational issue, ignoring all other aspects of the Bill. It was a non-party M.P., Professor Gruffydd, the representative of the University of Wales and a member of the Fleming Committee, who reminded the Commons that it was discussing an education bill, "not a bill to...fortify religious convictions."[12]

The other aspect of the Bill which interested the Labour Party - whether secondary education were to be segregated or multilateral and, if the former, whether there was to be parity of conditions between the different types of school - was barely discussed. Apart from Silkin's scepticism there were few references to it. It was as if the matter had been shelved, as in a sense it had, since the omission of a reference to types of secondary school in the legislation made a discussion of it superfluous. Decisions on this matter would now be political and administrative, not legislative.

The response of the Labour Party outside the Commons also concentrated on what were now the two main legislative objectives of a leaving age of 16 and the abolition of fees in direct grant schools. As its meeting before the Second Reading the T.U.C. Education Committee re-iterated its commitment to 16 as the leaving age; it was an essential part of the "full plan" and war-time achievements showed what was possible in terms of building given the will. Fees in direct grant schools should be abolished by law or, if this were not necessary, by administrative action.[13] Butler's statement on this matter fell short of what the T.U.C. wanted. Barbara Drake, a prominent member of the Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee, made the same points in a pamphlet, demanding a

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12 Ibid.,vol.396,col.417,20.1.44
13 T.U.C.,Education Committee Minutes 4,13.1.44;Note on the Education Bill

leaving age of 16 "from the start" and the abolition of fees in direct grant schools, envisaging the possibility of common secondary schooling in which institutions would "merge" into each other if these great obstacles were removed.[14] N.A.L.T.'s response was in more general political terms. It condemned the Bill as hypocritical, noting that much which Labour wanted was not certain to be achieved, since it was those very aspects of the Bill which depended on future ministerial decision rather than present legislative force. It lamented the concessions to the churches which, in its view, had been made without the radical educational changes for which the sacrifice, as it was regarded, might have been justified.[15] In another article in the New Leader Evelyn Denington denounced the Bill as "a sham", warning that "the raising of the age to 16...remains a pious hope in the misty future."[16]

The Committee stage of the Bill began on 8 February and lasted until May 1944, taking up the major part of the Commons' time during those months. It lasted much longer than Butler had hoped. He had asked the chief whip to allocate ten days for Committee, which would not allow detailed discussion of a complex Bill, but only "a pleasant canter through the main issues."[17] Again the sectarian issue dominated and prolonged discussions, with three Roman Catholic Labour M.Ps. - Logan, Tinker and Stokes - well to the fore in pressing their church's claims, and Welsh Labour M.Ps. retaliating for the non-conformists. Indeed Butler once allowed his diplomatic guard to drop and made a party point that he did not like "to interfere in the internecine strife on the other side, which resembles the situation which so frequently arises in the Balkans."[18]

The Labour Party's Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee met again. There was a slight constitutional difficulty, since

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14 B.Drake, Post-War Discussion Pamphlets No.2.Education, London 1944, pp.4-5
15 G.L.C., A/NLT/1V/15, Bulletin, January-February 1944
16 New Leader, 1.1.44, p.5
17 P.R.O.Ed136/378, Butler to Stuart, 22.11.43
18 H.C.Debates, vol.397, col.256, 16.2.44

the convention was that, once the Committee stage had started, matters should be left entirely in the hands of the Parliamentary Labour Party, but it had been agreed that the committee could make suggestions to the P.L.P.[19] It was rather a fine point, since the Commons Committee began its consideration of the Bill only on the day of the party meeting. Nonetheless it is a fact that party organisations paid little attention to the Bill from that day onwards. The Reconstruction Education Sub-Committee did not meet again. The T.U.C. Education Committee agreed to make one final effort to persaude Parliament to its point of view on the two main questions, and to send its notes on these points to M.Ps., but thereafter it did not concern itself very much with the legislation, correctly divining that no major changes were now likely.[20] N.A.L.T. in its Bulletin continued to denouce the Bill as a measure largely concerned with increasing state endowments for religious institutions, and went so far as to write off the Bill, arguing that a Labour government would have to introduce a new one.[21] Thus matters were now truly in the hands of M.Ps., with all major battles already won or lost, with the balance of the parties so one-sided that the government ran no risk of defeat, and with M.Ps. speaking increasingly not only for sectarian interests, as had already been noted, but also in the interests of particular forms of local government and for sectional interests such as those of teachers. The pre-occupation of Cove with the last of these diversions from the main issues of educational reform meant that N.A.L.T.'s parliamentary voice was heard much more often on questions of teachers' rights than on Labour's educational policies.

An important amendment was proposed by Butler himself and accepted by the Committee. This allowed children to be "educated

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19 T.H.,Labour Party Records,R.E.S.-C.Minutes 20,8.2.44
20 T.U.C.,Education Committee Minutes 6,14.3.44
21 G.L.C.,A/NLT/1V/15,Bulletin,April 1944

in accordance with the wishes of their parents", provided that this was compatible with efficient instruction and avoided unreasonable expense. Butler explained that the clause related to the number and types of schools to be provided. The qualifications were important, however, and might largely nullify the apparent respect for parental wishes. The local authority would decide how efficient instruction could best be provided. The clause could not bridge the gulf between the incompatible ideals of schooling based on selection by the local authority of pupils for segregated schooling with different aims and courses, and schooling based on parental wishes. Only in such questions as single-sex and denominational schooling could the general wishes of parents be reflected in a locality's pattern of schools, and even then it was the local authority which had to assess those wishes. This same issue came up on a later amendment, when Cove expressed the anxiety that such attention to group parental wishes would "Balkanise the entire educational system" with schools for non-conformists, Jews, agnostics, atheists, Liberals or Tories. The origin of the clause was a Roman Catholic complaint that parents' rights were being reduced in this Bill. It had nothing to do with the individual parent's right to choose a particular school for his child. It was concerned only with the obligation, highly qualified as has been seen, upon the local authority to reflect general parental wishes in the variety of schools which it provided.[22] Butler's handling of the questions on this clause was somewhat evasive. The notes provided by the Board[23] suggested that Butler should say that "it will be open to a parent to express a preference for, say, a Roman Catholic school, for a secondary school of the grammar school type, or for a boarding school, " but that he should stress that the "wishes of parents

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22 H.C.Debates,vol.397,cols.138-143,15.2.44;cols.197-199,256, 16.2.44

23 P.R.O.Ed136/479,Notes for Butler's speech

though carrying much weight cannot be conclusive." He did not in fact volunteer such views, but confined his references to the interests of blocs of parents. He was, however, asked the direct question whether, in the event of a dispute between a parent and the local authority over the placement of a child in a modern, technical or grammar school, the parent's view would prevail. In a long prevaricating reply full of qualifications and exceptions, he nonetheless said that he could give the assurance which his questioner sought. The clause was agreed on the basis of Butler's qualified affirmative reply.

Lewis Silkin moved an amendment which was important from the Labour viewpoint. Noting that, although the White Paper reference to three types of school had not been included in the Bill, he nonetheless wanted to ensure that there would be "parity of conditions for all types of secondary schools maintained by the local education authority." Butler successfully asked for the amendment to be withdrawn on the grounds that he did not want any one item which would be covered by subsequent regulations to be isolated and included in the Act itself. But he had "no difficulty in accepting the principle."[24] The officials' advice to Butler was less diplomatically phrased, but more revealing. Whilst the regulations would "prescribe similar standards" the amendment would make "such parity a statutory requirement."[25] As with other reforms, Labour was keen to see its ideals given legislative force, but it was frequently on those very issues that the Board asked Parliament to take its promises on trust and resisted legislative commitments.

The two major changes in the Bill desired by the Labour Party - a leaving age of 16 and the abolition of fees in direct grant schools - were both the subjects of divisions. The amendment on the first was

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24 H.C.Debates,vol.397,cols.245-246,16.2.44
25 P.R.O.Ed136/479,Note,undated and unsigned

not, however, moved by a Labour M.P., but by Mrs.Cazalet Keir who had already shown herself to be more in tune with Labour's educational ideals than those of her own party. The amendment also stood in the name of Creech-Jones for Labour and Clement Davies for the Liberals. She was supported by other Conservative members, including Viscountess Astor, as well as by Labour speakers. Her amendment required the leaving age to be raised to 16 within a year of the Act's coming into operation, whilst allowing the minister the right to come back to Parliament each year for three years to seek approval for a one-year delay. This was very much in line with Labour's wishes. The Board's view was very hostile. Its note to Butler was simple: "The object of the amendment appears to be quite outside the bounds of all practical politics."[26] Cove enthusiastically supported the amendment. Until now he considered that the House had been discussing the claims of various religious parties. He acknowledged the President's difficulties and accepted the need for concessions to the churches, but only if there were "a real educational content in this Bill." Without a leaving age of 16 there was no guarantee that there would be any such content. Butler made a long speech in reply to the debate. As was now his custom he did not oppose the objective, but emphasized the practical difficulties. Greenwood, as leading spokesman for Labour, then rose to express his disappointment at Butler's reply. "I really have done my best for my right honourable Friend about this Bill," he said sorrrowfully, but found that Butler now accepted the arguments but not the measure. The House divided and the amendment was defeated. 137 M.Ps., including most of those on the Labour benches who were not in the government and some Conservatives, voted in favour. 172 M.Ps., including most Conservative and all Labour members of the government who were present, voted against.[27]

A week later, on an amendment from Lewis Silkin, the future of direct grant schools was debated. His argument was that the retention

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26 P.R.O.Ed136/481,Note,undated and unsigned
27 H.C.Debates,vol.398,cols.710-758,21.3.44

of a system by which some pupils were admitted because of their parents' ability to pay rather than their own ability to win a place was contrary to the agreed plan for free secondary education. He believed that "the vast majority of Hon. Members in this House, if they were free to decide, and certainly the majority of the vast public outside, would want education to become democratic and available to all on equal terms." Cove, in his longest speech in Committee, supported strongly. He argued that, "as a matter of high social democratic policy, we ought to sweep the field clean throughout the whole state system." A Conservative supported on the principle that "there shall not be any distinction drawn as to the kind of secondary education a child shall receive because of the financial position of the parents." By contrast an isolated Labour M.P. opposed the amendment, on the grounds that the same result would be achieved "by natural evolution" as excellence in the public system reduced the demand for private education and fee-paying. Greenwood concluded the debate for Labour. He was conciliatory in tone and, as before, somewhat sorrowful that he had to take part in a division. "I have not tried to be troublesome about the Bill. I have done my best to help my right honourable Friend, even when I went into the lobby against him, as I may have to today," he lamented. Butler's defence of fee-paying was limp and reflected his own lack of conviction. He knew that he had to oppose the amendment, yet could not convincingly argue that fees must be abolished in voluntary grammar schools but not in direct grant schools. His officials' advice reflected his dilemma. The issue had been raised on an earlier amendment proposed by Cove. It had not been called, but Holmes' terse advice finished, "The amendment must be rejected."[28] A week before the debate Williams, who had taken a keen interest in this question and who favoured the abolition of fees, presented Butler with a file of papers on the topic.

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28 P.R.O.Ed136/482,Note by Holmes,undated

Butler appended a note which indicated that he had read it with care. He marked particularly the section giving the educational arguments for the abolition of fees. Some-one else later endorsed the file with the justified comment that it contained almost no arguments in favour of the retention of fees. That accurately reflected Williams' view that in fact there was none.[29] Thus Butler knew what he had to achieve but had few arguments to deploy which he himself found convincing. "I have to take the world as I find it," he told the Commons. One of the Bill's fundamental principles was that there should be a variety of schools. Having "freed the vast range of secondary education, all we say is that, consistent with our philosophy, there should be a few schools - there are very few - in which it should be possible for parents to contribute to the cost of the education of their children." As if to minimise the importance of the question he stated that only 4% of secondary schools were direct grant. His generalisations did not hide the fact that these schools were being made exceptions to a principle which Butler had himself proclaimed in his White Paper, and that the reason was his failure to convince his own party. He went as far as his party problem would allow him to go. The Board would "expect the local authority to assess its needs and tell the Governors what places it requires." In areas where direct grant schools provided most of the grammar school places the Board might have to review the direct grant list. Whilst the interim Fleming Report had recommended abolition of fees, this was not, he claimed, its principal recommendation. (It was, of course, the one matter on which he had sought early guidance). The direct grant schools were held to be extensions of that desirable variety which hitherto had consisted of three types of secondary schools. Butler's response showed all his mastery of diplomatic language. When the Committee divided Silkin's

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29 P.R.O.Ed136/432,Williams to Butler,20.3.44, with note by Butler and an anonymous endorsement

amendment attracted 95 votes. It was defeated by the 183 votes of the Conservatives and of Labour ministers. The latter included Attlee who had to support the government of which he was a member rather than the party of which he was leader.[30]

Towards the end of the Committee stage an episode occurred which made plain to all the realities of the parliamentary situation. The Commons had already passed a motion in favour of equal pay in the civil service, and a group of Conservatives now sponsored an amendment to the Education Bill to achieve this for women teachers. The amendment stood in the name of Mrs.Cazalet Keir, who had already instigated the division on the leaving age. She was supported not only by such a well-known feminist as Lady Astor, but also by many younger Conservative M.Ps. such as Peter Thorneycroft and Quintin Hogg. The motion was bound to be supported by the Labour Party and Parker indicated that Labour M.Ps. would vote for it. Butler's diplomatic skills were insufficient to prevent a division. Having offered to talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about it, he warned that, if he were defeated, it would not be in the interests of "this great reform which I hold in my hand." Excitement mounted. There were shouts of "Divide!" Hogg warned that in the absence of a "set assurance" he would vote against the government. There were more calls for a vote. After more speeches Butler pleaded again for restraint, claiming that he could not direct independent salary negotiators to accept particular salary scales. He again offered to speak to the Chancellor. "You can still do that," called an interrupter. "Yes, I could still do that afterwards, if I were still there," retorted Butler. Thus he implied that the government's survival, or at least his own, depended on victory in this vote. To emphasize the point he added, "I must put myself and the government

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30 H.C.Debates,vol.398,cols.1272-1312,28.3.44

in the hands of the Committee". The amendment was carried by one vote, with 117 for and 116 against. Greenwood for the Labour Party as a whole, Bevan for the Labour left and Hogg for the Conservative rebels all rose to urge the government not to regard the vote as one of confidence. Anthony Eden replied that Butler had left the House in no doubt that it was. The next day Churchill himself spoke on the matter. The Commons must withdraw the whole amended clause now and the government would re-introduce its own unsullied clause at the Report stage. It was an authoritarian statement making the future conduct of the war dependent on the Commons coming to heel. The Commons somersaulted and the clause was withdrawn by a majority of more than 400 votes. Clearly the Bill was not to be amended, save on the motion of Butler himself.[31] The Bill had its Third Reading in the Commons on 11 May and then went to the Lords. It received the royal assent on 3 August 1944.

The parliamentary treatment of the Bill illustrated well the problems of the Parliamentary Labour Party as an instrument for educational reform. It also showed the consequences of the strategy adopted by the party leadership of not only taking part in a coalition government for the duration of the war, but also of allowing domestic legislation which was of prime importance to Labour to be drafted in circumstances which allowed Labour ministers little direct influence and yet reduced Labour's parliamentary strength.

The dangers of this strategy had been noted by Harold Laski, the Labour leader who had instituted the party's programme of policy-making for the post-war period, when he had warned that legislation passed now would last for twenty years and had advised that, if it were poor or inadequate, it might be better left unpassed for the time being.[32] Laski's view was at odds with that of Attlee, who expressed

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31 Ibid.,vol.398,cols.1356-1396,28.3.44;cols.1452-1457,1480-1524, 29.3.44;cols.1578-1656,30.3.44

32 Supra p.88

his irritation in 1941 by explaining, "I am sufficiently experienced in warfare to know that the frontal attack with a flourish of trumpets, heartening as it is, is not the best way to capture a position". Whilst the Education Bill was still in Committee he gave a longer and more reasoned response to Laski's criticism in the form of a letter which he typed himself. A coalition for the prosecution of the war required that neither capitalist nor socialist principles could prevail, but that whoever governed after the war had the right to expect that some preparations had already been made. The new government would doubtless want to alter some things, "but a great number of matters must be settled now and will not be susceptible of much alteration because action will have to be taken immediately." Turning specifically to domestic politics he wrote, "On home affairs there are a vast number of matters which do not involve party politics, but which are nonetheless important. There are other matters on which some agreement can be come to. There are others in which the party differences are so great that they must await a decision by the country. We have to work today with the House of Commons which we have got."[33] The Education Bill was clearly not in his last category. It was a matter which did not necessitate a great party division.

Attlee's defence of his position could be sustained in relation to education only if Labour participants in the coalition government worked successfully to promote Labour's objectives within that context. There is no evidence to suggest that any Labour ministers except Ede, Bevin and Tomlinson made significant attempts to influence the legislation. Bevin and Tomlinson at the Ministry of Labour consistently and strenuously tried to ensure an early raising of the laving age to 16, but they failed to achieve its inclusion in the Act. The consideration of the proposed

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33 Quoted in K.Martin, Harold Laski, London 1953, pp.158-160

legislation by the Lord President's Committee and the War Cabinet was cursory and, Bevin apart, no Labour minister attempted to promote Labour's ideals.

Ede's main contribution from a party point of view was to achieve the deletion of any reference to the three types of secondary school from the Bill. But, as we have already noted, his motive was not to promote common or multilateral schooling, but rather to allow a great variety of institutions providing secondary education in accordance with local needs and to free local authorities from an imposed rigid pattern of schools. Yet he seemed to have a much more open attitude than that prevalent at the Board. As he explained in a speech in 1944, "We have a large number of children, every one of which gives to the world gifts that are peculiar to the individual child. The child and not the subject becomes the centre of our education."[34] In his Third Reading speech he declared that the Act would bring education "as far as possible and for as long as possible in a common school."[35] He had in mind a system free from financial obstacles in the admission of pupils to particular schools, and not the multilateral school, for he had rejected the notion of abolishing private preparatory schools,[36] was hostile to what he called a state monopoly in education, and constantly praised the virtues of variety both in the function of schools and the means of controlling them. Moreover his desire to delete the reference to the three types of school met with the immediate agreement of the Board's officials who wanted rigid segregation. Whatever Ede's motive, the Board's purposes were served as well as any other by the deletion of the reference. Nonetheless, and irrespective of Ede's motive, the legislative position by August 1944 was that, whereas there was no statutory obligation on local authorities to have multilateral schools or even parity between different types of schools, neither was there

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34 A speech made to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Butler also spoke; both speeches were printed as R.A.Butler, The Education Bill, London 1944; the quotation from Ede is on p.11

35 H.C.Debates, vol.399, col.2142, 11.5.44

36 Supra p.158

a statutory obligation to have a tripartite or any other particular form of secondary education. The new Minister of Education would have considerable latitude as far as legislative obligations were concerned.

On the longer-established demands of the Labour Party, viz. that all secondary education should be planned on the basis of a school life lasting at least until the age of 16 and that there should be no fees in any schools receiving public grants, Ede did not use his position to promote his party's aims. His relations with his party's educational reformers were not close. He was much more committed to the Board's policies than to his party's. As early as September 1941 he had indicated to Butler that, although not satisfied with the Green Book he "could not reject so overwhelming a consensus of opinion in its favour...if it represented the considered compromises arrived at by all the many interests to be consulted."[37] He seems to have seen his function as that of supporting Butler and helping to achieve his goals, which differed little from his own. Thus he played a supportive role. Butler later expressed his gratitude for "the warm support of Chuter Ede who had been himself a teacher", and recorded his appreciation of Ede as "a loyal collaborator from the Labour Party."[38] The latter description seems especially apposite.

Whilst being remote from his own party's education policy-makers, he was not an insider at the Board, living in a different world from his colleagues. Theirs was a world of close relationships bonded by school and university links, club membership, and years of collaboration at the Board. Whilst Parker, Labour's spokesman during the Committee stage, shared this world, Ede did not. Ramsbotham, Butler and Spens were all members of the Carlton Club. Norwood, Williams, Leeson (spokesman for the public schools) and Savage (L.C.C.Education Officer, whose "local authority" opinion was often sought) were members of the

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37 P.R.O.Ed136/215,Ede to Butler,10.9.41
38 R.A.Butler,The Art of the Possible,London 1971,p.96 and p.100

Athenaeum. Butler and Parker had been pupils of Norwood at Marlborough College. Butler had been a fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge when Spens had been a tutor and was elected Master. Both Leeson and Parker had been undergraduates at St.John's College, Oxford, although before Norwood became its President. Apart from the Board's current officials, Leeson and Savage had both been Board officials, the former from 1919 to 1924, the latter from 1919 until 1940 when he left as Senior Chief Inspector. Williams, who seems to have been the most influential contributor to the discussions, had been assistant secretary to the Spens Committee and was an assessor to the Norwood and Fleming Committees; no other man had his finger in so many of the appropriate pies.[39] Ede did not figure in any of these relationships.

Ede's diary conveys the impression of a man unmoved by the hopes and excitements which inspired the educational reformers of the time. Up-dating the administrative structures of the educational system seems to have been in his view the limit of what was needed. In this sense he was as much the prisoner of his long experience as were the Board's officials. The pattern of secondary school development had been established long ago, and Ede was now happy to help in the eradication of the inconsistencies and anomalies which had inevitably arisen. For the most part his approach was legalistic and his opinions were formed in the historical context of secondary education as it had evolved in the first part of the century rather than as part of a vision of the future.

Thus, whatever the theoretical merits of Attlee's view, there is no evidence to suggest that Labour in the government contributed in any significant way to the advancement of the party's educational causes. The only major party decision, and indeed the only matter

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39 The many connections between these leading figures are shown graphically on p.289

on which the views of the Board's officials did not hold sway (apart from the settlement of the dual system controversy, where they had no fixed view and were delighted at Butler's and Ede's diplomatic triumph in finding a via media), was that on the direct grant schools. On this matter a Conservative Party view, which Butler did not share but which he could not changed, prevailed.

The parliamentary proceedings were long but they did not change the Bill very much on the major issues, and certainly not in Labour's favour. Holmes' dictum that the public at large could influence the legislation through their M.Ps. was quite disingenuous. He resisted vigorously any changes in the agreed plans. Churchill chose an amendment, which was on a side-issue, as the occasion to issue his ultimatum that, if he were ever defeated in the Commons, he would walk away from the war and leave some-one else to deal with the defeat of Hitler. The Labour Party was even more anxious than the Conservative Party to get the parliamentary proceedings over as quickly as possible, since their predominant feature was the almost daily pressing by Roman Catholic Labour M.Ps. of their church's case and the occasional internecine dispute when the non-conformist representatives were goaded into retaliation. The Act was neutral on the question of secondary school organisation, but was a defeat for Labour on the questions of the leaving age and fees in direct grant school, whilst parity of conditions in secondary schools was not even mentioned.

EPILOGUE

Chapter 12: 'THE NATION'S SCHOOLS' - LABOUR'S DEBACLE

The Education Act was regarded in 1944 and afterwards as a triumph for Butler and it is often identified by reference to his name. It is still in 1979 the principal legislation governing schools in England and Wales. Although it has been much amended, no government has brought forward a measure to replace it, and the greater part of the major re-casting of secondary education on comprehensive lines, which has been achieved under government direction since 1965, has been carried out within the terms of the 1944 Act. There can therefore be no doubt about the importance of the legislation. It is wrong, however, to conclude either that Butler was the main architect of the measure or that it represented a radical change of educational policy in response to the egalitarian mood engendered by the war.

Butler's main contribution to the passage of this legislation was his diplomatic skill which was most evident in his handling of the dual system negotiations. In addition his personal inclination to accept that the role of parental income in the allocation of children to post-primary schools should be reduced enabled him to co-operate with his political opponents, the teachers and the local authorities more easily than most of his party colleagues could have done. On this matter he carried his party, much of which was either indifferent or reluctant, failing only on the question of direct grant schools.

On many important matters, however, he did not succeed in changing his officials' minds. It was they, and not he, who were the architects of the Act's provision for secondary education. Their view of public consultation, not his, prevailed. They issued their confidential Green Book, which was never officially disclosed to M.Ps. in general let alone the public at large, for consultations

with those branches of the education service which they considered to be in a professional relationship with the Board. Butler and Ede met many deputations, but no change was made in the main educational proposals of the Green Book. Legislation was in draft almost a year before its publication and, in spite of Eden's denial in the Commons on 16 July, whilst some of these deputations were still presenting their thoughts in good faith at the Board's offices. Committees were set up and their views, if they accorded with those of the Board, were publicised; whilst, if they did not, the report was delayed or its authors denigrated. The only major changes effected in Parliament itself were those belated amendments which Butler himself proposed to increase the rights of parents and to make a further financial concession to the voluntary schools. It was made clear beyond doubt by Churchill's diktat of 29 March 1944 that Parliament was not intended to alter what the government had decided. The cabinet itself had given scant attention to the draft legislation. The Board was thus largely unsupervised by the two groups to which constitutionally it was answerable, the cabinet and Parliament.

Apart from the proposals on the dual system and to a lesser extent those on the structure of local education authorities, the views of the Board's officials as finalized in May 1941 emerged largely unscathed in the Act of 1944. Those views were gauged to maintain the essential elements of a segregated and selective system of schooling for children over the age of 11 in spite of the egalitarian mood of the times which the Board's most politically shrewd official, R.S.Wood, saw might lead to a large Labour majority in Parliament after the war. The political objective of the Board's officials required that legislation be passed before that day came.

The Board's officials, with the exception of Cleary, were committed to the continuation of the Hadow re-organisation of elementary schools to provide post-11 education for the mass of children, whilst minorities were selected for academic or technical education in separate schools. They recognised that the admission of pupils to these selective schools according to their parents' ability to pay was no longer defensible in the prevailing social climate. Williams went further and enthusiastically embraced the view that selective schools should become much more rigorously selective in an academic sense, even advocating the abolition of fees in direct grant schools. The Board's officials, under R.S.Wood's guidance, had already made this advance between the publication of the Spens Report, which they had promptly rejected, and the commencement of their planning for the future. But, apart from Cleary's two attempts to promote multilateral schools or at least common courses for 11-13 year olds, the Board's officials remained committed to Hadow. They successfully ensured that their views prevailed.

The Green Book, the Act and the post-war development of secondary education were identical in all main respects. Secondary education was to begin at the age of 11. The re-organisation of elementary schools, so that children over 11 would be educated in separate departments if not separate buildings, was to remain the means by which the mass of children were to receive something beyond elementary schooling. Their education was to terminate at 15. That of technical college pupils was to last until the ages of 15 or 16, whilst grammar school children were to be provided with a school place until they were 16 or 18. Mistakes in selection were theoretically to be corrected by reviews of all pupils' progress at the age of 13, although nobody ever stated this with conviction.

Direct grant schools were to remain and to charge fees. The quite distinct objectives of the three types of school were related to the stratification of employment into professional, technical and clerical grades, and manual work. There was no statutory obligation to have parity of conditions between the three types of school. For secondary education the Act was a landmark on the evolutionary path which had begun in 1867, when tripartism began its life as the idée fixe of English education. In that year the Endowed Schools Commission found a desire by parents for three kinds of school beyond the elementary level: public schools leading to the universities and the professions, endowed grammar schools for the middle class and business careers, and a third type, as yet non-existent, providing schooling for potential manual workers to the age of 14.[1] By 1944 inroads had been made into the class exclusiveness of selective schools, the variety of state schools had been increased, and the length of school life for the majority of children was about to be increased by one year. On matters which were regarded by the Board's officials as purely educational, the triumph was theirs not Butler's.

The most influential of those officials in the secondary sphere was G.G.Williams. In 1954 he looked back on the Act to which he had contributed so much. By then he was a knight and the retired Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Education. Reviewing the ten years of post-war educational development, he commented, "It says much for our political system that at no time was there any violent breach of policy." He added that "the real explanation of its [the Act's] success is to be found in the existence of a united opinion both inside and outside Parliament such as is seldom found save in times of great crisis."[2] The consensus argument

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1 A.V.Judges,'Tradition and the Comprehensive School',British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.11,no.1,November 1953,p.5

2 G.G.Williams,'The First Ten Years of the Ministry of Education', British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.111,no.2,May 1955, pp.101-102

was still being used and to the same effect. Forgotten were Cleary's advocacy of multilateral schools and of common courses for 11-13 year olds, the latter of which was also advocated by Norwood, the support for multilateral schools not only from Labour M.Ps. but also from Conservative M.Ps. and teachers, the anxieties of Butler himself about the earliness of selection and the difficulties of later transfers, the overwhelming support for the raising of the leaving age to 16 which included both Spens and Norwood, the consensus in favour of the abolition of fees in direct grant schools which included Williams himself, the local authorities and the teachers, and excluded only some Conservative M.Ps. and the schools in question, and the expectation indeed assumption that the new secondary schools were to have parity of conditions. The administrator's art was as influential as the politician's diplomacy in the making of the 1944 Act.

The only one of the Board's aims for secondary education which was not mentioned in the Act itself was the central one of the tripartite division of secondary schools. This denoted not a change of policy but a difficulty with drafting. However, the new occupant of the ministerial chair had legislative latitude on this question. Events ensured that at the crucial time when local authorities were preparing their school development plans, the administrators' hands were strengthened by the arrival of weak ministers.

In May 1945 Churchill proposed that the coalition government should be maintained until the Japanese were defeated. This might be a very long time. Churchill was aware of the U.S.A.'s development of the atomic bombs which were to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and terminate the war earlier than expected. Attlee and the Labour Party were not. There was a trap here for Labour which

Bevin wished to enter and about which Attlee was uncertain. Churchill's timing was poor. The Labour Party Conference was in session at Blackpool and it was there that Attlee received the proposal. The conference was chaired by Ellen Wilkinson who had just returned with Attlee from San Francisco where they had taken part in the meetings to set up the United Nations. Labour delegates left their leaders in no doubt that they wanted an early election. Attlee still hesitated and offered Churchill a continuation of the coalition until October when a general election should be held. Churchill rejected this, dissolved Parliament and announced an election for July.[3] The coalition government was thus ended and replaced by a caretaker Conservative government. This of course necessitated the appointment of new people to fill the vacancies left by departing Labour ministers. Butler moved from education to the Ministry of Labour, which was a promotion, for he was now in the cabinet. His successor in charge of education was not in the cabinet.

Churchill's choice as the new Minister was Richard Law, the younger son of Bonar Law. He had been at the Foreign Office for most of the war and had not previously shown any interest in educational matters. . His Oxford college was St. John's, although he had been there before Norwood arrived as President. His Commons career was to end with the loss of his seat in the 1945 election. It could not be said of his Parliamentary Secretary that she lacked experience in the field of educational politics. Mrs.Cazalet Keir was the Conservative advocate of multilateral schools in the Commons debate on the White Paper, the proposer of the amendment to raise the leaving age to 16 when the Bill was in Committee, and above all the proposer of the amendment to bring equal pay for women teachers

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3 A.J.P.Taylor, English History 1914-1945, Oxford 1965, p.595
C.R.Attlee, As It Happened, London 1954, pp.134-138
H.Morrison, An Autobiography, London, 1960, p.235
H.Dalton, The Fateful Years, London 1957, pp.458-459

which had caused the government's defeat and so angered Churchill. She had little reason to expect preferment from Churchill, least of all in the field of education. Churchill's choice may be seen as an example of magnanimity towards an erstwhile thorn in his flesh, evidence of his sense of humour or testimony to his indifference towards education. When he telephoned her with his customary lack of consideration in the early hours of the morning, her first thought was that the telephone would bring bad news, such as the death of a relative in the war. She remembered little more of the conversation than Churchill's comment that "there were just as many girls to look after as boys."[4]

Their one important act during this brief period of office was to issue a pamphlet entitled, The Nation's Schools.[5] It did not accord with Mrs.Cazalet Keir's views. She did not contribute to its drafting. She, like every other M.P., had an election to fight. It did accord precisely with the views of the Ministry's officials. Arguing that there was already a tripartite system of secondary schools and that the Act required enough changes without being extended to include new forms of school, the pamphlet caused particular offence by advocating a limitation on grammar school places. This had, of course, always been an objective of the Board's officials, for they believed that the failure of many grammar school pupils to stay at school until they were 16 and of an even greater proportion to obtain their school certificate was evidence of an excess of places. They clearly lacked the confidence of reformers that this would be altered as soon as financial barriers were removed and able but poor children were admitted in larger numbers. Their aim was also to divert able children to the technical colleges. It now seemed to many people, however, and especially to Labour people, that little was to change as a result of the 1944 Act. Not only were the schools to remain much as they were already, but, at the very moment when the chances of working class

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4 T.Cazalet-Keir,From the Wings,London 1967,pp.122-123
5 Ministry of Education,The Nation's Schools,London 1945

children being admitted to high quality secondary education were being increased, the number of places was to be limited and perhaps decreased. The pamphlet was an affront to the Labour Party. Richard Law and Mrs.Cazalet Keir were but transitory figures and the Ministry's timing was well-suited yet again to its own purpose, for its views had been published, as guidance to local authorities which were preparing their development plans, just before the election of a new government. The Ministry's action seemed to be an attempt to pre-empt the next government's decision.

Within a fortnight of the withdrawal from government of the Labour ministers, a furious argument occurred in the Commons Supply Committee over two important questions: the authorship and nature of The Nation's Schools, and the effect on educational policy of the end to the party truce. It was initiated by Cove. His argument was that, in spite of the praise for Butler, the Act had reached the statute book because all parties in the Commons had supported it. But now, as soon as the coalition had been dissolved, a Conservative Minister had issued in The Nation's Schools a party policy for secondary education. He saw this as "the Tory implementing of the Butler and Chuter Ede Act." Law retaliated with the claim that Ede had had "far more to do with this pamphlet than I had." Challenged by Lindsay to say how much of the pamphlet he had seen before leaving office, Ede admitted, "The whole of it. I saw it in draft. I suggested certain corrections." He had also discussed it with Butler. Ede calmed the atmosphere by indicating that he expected to speak later in the debate.

Ede's speech included an acceptance of responsibility for all that had been decided at the Board whilst he was Parliamentary Secretary. In itself this was merely a statement of the convention that a minister accepts responsibility for everything done by his department, or he resigns. But he qualified the statement in two contradictory ways.

On the one hand he claimed that he had been given "as much freedom of initiative" as any Parliamentary Secretary, thereby seeming to maximise his share of the responsibility. On the other hand his acceptance of "full responsibility" was delivered after a request to his listeners to bear in mind that the Conservatives had had "twice as many political supporters in the House as I had." On the matter of secondary school places he did not consider that the committee should be "much concerned as to the exact proportion that may be provided in separate schools, because I do not believe the separate schools will long survive." In his own county of Surrey the education authority had had to provide grammar courses in modern schools and were now finding a demand for technical courses in grammar schools. "I believe," he concluded, "that the future lies with the school for which I wish we could find a better name...what we call the multilateral school." His assumption seemed to be that multilateral schools would just happen despite the Ministry's advice that separate schools should be built.[6]

When the 1945 election resulted in a big Labour victory, Attlee appointed Ellen Wilkinson as Minister of Education. She enjoyed a reputation as a fiery left-winger. Known as "Red Ellen", both because of her hair and her views, her chief claim to fame was as a leader of the Jarrow marchers. Her educational background was similar to Ede's. The daughter of a Lancashire cotton operative, she had attended elementary school, won a scholarship to secondary school and taken a degree at Manchester University. For a short time she had been a pupil-teacher. Her political affiliations had taken her from the Independent Labour Party, which she had joined in 1912, to the Communist Party in 1920 and then to the Labour Party, in the interests of which she had been elected to Parliament in 1924. Churchill had included

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6 H.C.Debates,vol.411,cols.1332-1345,1357-1358,11.6.45

her in his war-time governments, first as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Pensions and then as Parliamentary Secretary to Herbert Morrison at the Ministry of Home Security. She came to the Ministry of Education in 1945 with a reputation for long and hard-working service to the Labour Party and with junior ministerial experience. What she lacked was experience of the department to which Attlee had now appointed her as the only woman in the cabinet.

She arrived in a hornet's nest. Not conversant with the issues which had pre-occupied others in recent years, she was even more of an outsider at Belgrave Square than Ede had been. He was very knowledgeable about the issues and a match for officials in discussions on regulations and legislation. She was not. The men with whom she had to deal were the same men who had been at the Board, in most cases, since the First World War, and who had spent the major part of their working lives during the past five years hammering out those policies which they had just issued for the guidance of local authorities.
In the cases of both Mrs.Cazalet Keir and Ellen Wilkinson it was a question of insecure novice ministers under the direction of vastly-experienced and committed officials who knew exactly what they wanted. The fact that one was a Conservative and the other Labour was not so important.

Ellen Wilkinson had an additional problem, for she had poor health. It is not clear to what extent illness undermined her political resolve, or her political problems and doubts were the cause of illness. Her friend and former Labour M.P., Leah Manning, dated her asthmatic attacks from her assumption of office at the Ministry of Education. Ellen Wilkinson's sister had long suffered from asthma and the Minister would often drive Leah Manning to visit her, but Manning had not previously heard of Ellen herself being a sufferer. On one occasion she had to leave the despatch box in the middle of an attack. She had arrived

late and breathless, apologising to members with the explanation that she had been opening an art exhibition. The thought of Ellen Wilkinson, who had a very poor dress sense and was on this occasion adorned with "the most appallingly funny hat", opening an art exhibition caused general merriment. She did not of course understand the reason for the howls of laughter, and left the chamber gasping for breath.[7] In May 1946 she went to Switzerland to recuperate and during the Summer her name appeared regularly in the Times' invalid column.[8]

Ellen Wilkinson did not withdraw The Nation's Schools. She was constantly asked to do so. Cove led the movement to achieve this end. Wilkinson seemed to accept a rather naive brief, that to do so would amount to a repudiation of the 1944 Act, and stubbornly maintained her position. She has been defended on various grounds. Leah Manning has attempted to explain the quarrel in terms of Cove's personal jealousy and even suggested that he might have been the "instrument of a more powerful personality - one to whom a successful woman was anathema."[9] It is not clear to whom this refers. She has also noted that Wilkinson's friend Herbert Morrison was very ill in hospital at the time and could not help her in her problem. It is curious that Morrison does not mention his former Parliamentary Secretary in his memoirs and it is known that he opposed her in cabinet over the raising of the leaving age to 15. In any case the allegation does not seem likely. Cove was stating the official party position when faced with a member of his own party who seemed to him to be the puppet of her Ministry at a crucial time in the development of state education. Her Parliamentary Private Secretary at the time, H.D.Hughes, has defended her as an able minister who carried through much of Labour's policies, notably the raising of the leaving age to 15 in 1947, an increase in educational expenditure to more than

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7 L.Manning, A Life for Education, London 1970, pp.203-204
8 Times, 30.4.46, p.4; 26.7.46, p.4; 23.9.46, p.4; 25.9.46, p.4
9 L.Manning, op.cit., p.204

£100 million, the restoration of schooling after the devastation of war, and a reduction of 28% in the number of direct grant schools. He has explained the failure to promote multilateral schools in terms of uncertainty within the Labour Party, and has claimed that not only she but also her Ministry "positively encouraged experimentation."[10]

This interpretation cannot be sustained. We have seen how the Board's policy evolved during the early 1940s, and especially we have noted that the Board's officials were policy-makers and not just administrators. In open discussion proposals which did not conform to their plans were rarely rejected. A leaving age of 16, which had early been eliminated by Holmes as a desirable objective, was always held to be desirable, but not immediately attainable, in answers to the Board's critics. Similarly the door was never closed to "experimentation" with multilateral schools. Yet the whole burden of the Board's policies before 1944 and of the Ministry's policy after 1945 was to make more rigid the tripartite segregation of post-primary education which it had long been the Board's aim to achieve. Only a very strong politician stood any chance of altering that policy. Ellen Wilkinson was not, and probably could not be dominant over her department. Labour's education policies were clear. The party wanted multilateral schools ideally, and equality between different secondary schools in terms of buildings, staffing and leaving age in the meantime. That was not consistent with the policies of Belgrave Square. Cyril Burt, who contributed much to the psychological rationale of the tripartite division in secondary education, later wrote that, "our English education system, like our constitution and our cathedrals, has grown by a slow process of irregular accretion."[11] The events of 1945 to 1947 fit well into that picture. Ellen Wilkinson lacked the knowledge, experience, commitment and physical strength to change the face of such a longstanding edifice whose current architects were so well-established in

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10 H.D.Hughes,'In Defence of Ellen Wilkinson', History Workshop Journal, no.7,June 1979,pp.157-158

11 C.Burt,'The Examination at Eleven Plus',British Journal of Educational Studies,vol.VII,no.2,May 1959,p.99.Burt's credentials and the integrity of his scholarship have recently been questioned. Vide L.S.Hearnshaw,Cyril Burt:Psychologist,London 1979,passim

the execution of their design and had already had their most recent blue-prints approved and despatched to their site foremen in the cities and counties.

The 1945 Labour Party Conference passed a motion asking that "newly built secondary schools be of the multilateral type wherever possible." At the 1946 Conference, held at Bournemouth - the cradle of the Green Book, Ellen Wilkinson refused to repudiate The Nation's Schools, claiming, "That would mean repudiating the splendid work of my good friend Chuter Ede." She considered that, by giving teachers the same pay and holidays and by providing buildings which were "as far as possible" as good, parity between schools would be achieved. "When we talk about three types of secondary school they [the Labour teachers] think that they are going to be first, second and third class secondary schools," she said. "I do want to assure this audience that whatever may have been in the mind of the framerof the 1944 Bill, that is not in my mind as an administrator of the Act." Cove nonetheless proposed a motion asking the conference to repudiate the pamphlet. Arguing that the pamphlet was a coalition document, Cove rejected the view that to repudiate it would be to repudiate the Act or Ede. Mentioning Ede's reference to the huge Conservative majority in the Commons when he had been Parliamentary Secretary, Cove declared, "That fact no longer exists." The Nation's Schools was "a fundamental pamphlet" from which all other ministerial circulars followed. Cove was supported by Lionel Elvin, at that time the delegate from Cambridge University Labour Party, who commented,"I thought that she [Ellen Wilkinson] was very complacent in assuming that parents would not now mind to which of these three types of secondary schools their children went." At the end of the short debate Harold Clay, who had played a major part in formulating Labour's educational policies and who was that year's party chairman, made a

brief statement on behalf of the Minister. She had omitted to say that "she herself does not like the wording of the pamphlet in certain aspects." Clay added, "I myself regarded it as very unfortunate." The pamphlet was out of print and would not be reprinted in its present form. Ellen Wilkinson was not satisfied that her intentions had been clearly conveyed by that statement, and she returned to the microphone before Clay put the N.A.L.T. and East Lewisham motion to the vote. The only part of the pamphlet which she did not like was the section on the limitation of grammar school places. That section would be re-written, "but I do not want any of you to think that I have said that the pamphlet will be withdrawn, because that would be equivalent to repudiating the 1944 Act to which the party assented." She asked conference not to pass the resolution. Cove refused to withdraw it. Conference then carried the motion which was in effect one of censure on the Minister.[12] Less than a week later Ellen Wilkinson made it clear that she had accepted her officials' view rather than that of her party's conference. Addressing the Association of Education Committees, to whom The Nation's Schools had been in part addressed, she was reported as saying that "She disagreed with people who said that by talking in terms of three types of secondary schools...the government were promulgating a wrong social philosophy. By abolishing fees in maintained schools they had ensured that entry to those schools would be on the basis of merit. Parents had to be made aware of the advantages of the modern school. They must not think that only the grammar school education was secondary."[13]

Later in the month Cove returned to the attack in the Commons in the course of a general debate on the education estimates of expenditure. Ellen Wilkinson had declared that her two prime goals were to raise the leaving age to 15 by 1 April 1947 and to establish

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12 Labour Party, Report of the Annual Conference 1946, London 1946, pp.189-195; Times, 14.6.46, p.8; M.Parkinson, The Labour Party and the Organisation of Secondary Education 1918-1965, London 1970, pp.40-41

13 Times, 19.6.46, p.2

a comprehensive school meals service. Then she turned to her quarrel with her own party, but her comments showed that she had not understood the point of her critics. "Secondary education does not and should not mean grammar school education for all," she declared. People were used to thinking of a grammar school place as the only means of obtaining secondary education and some in her own party disagreed with the impression given in The Nation's Schools. "I share their point of view," she said, "but I must say that it is not a progressive, but a retrograde, step to say that the only alternative is identical secondary education for all."
"Nobody said that," interrupted Cove. The Minister proceeded with her speech. There was a need for experiment. Some systems had been tried and proved whilst "others have been barely tried at all." She left no doubt in the minds of her listeners. "The grammar school is well-known, and it will have a vital part to play in our national life," she said. Having described the three types of secondary school she then allowed for experiments in other forms, stating, "We must take into account other possibilities - the multilateral or bilateral schools. I welcome experiments of this kind...They have some great attractions." Cove was not mollified and took the traditional Commons step to censure the Minister, by moving an amendment to reduce her salary. It was a ferocious attack. "I feel that I am expressing a feeling throughout the educational world... of deep disappointment with the Minister of Education. She has undoubtedly given the impression that she has not got to grips with her department, and that she does not understand...the direction and drift of the educational policy she is pursuing." He referred to the Labour conference and her speech to the A.E.C., and time and time again challenged her to repudiate The Nation's Schools. He offered to sit down, so that she could state her position at once. She

remained aloof. "Unless she repudiates not only this pamphlet...," he declared, "but all the leaflets, circulars and pamphlets which flow from it, she no longer believes in the educational policy of the Labour Party." Cove received no support from other M.Ps. and one, who like him was sponsored by the N.U.T., rose to dissociate that body from Cove's attack. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry, David Hardman, who had not hitherto figured in the Labour Party's educational affairs nationally, although he was a prominent member of Cambridgeshire Education Commitee, replied to the debate. He claimed that his Minister wanted "variety in education, and variety in development planning." He expounded Wilkinson's attitude to the pamphlet thus. "She was not responsible for the pamphlet. She thinks that a wrong impression may have been given in a certain passage, although...she thinks that this has been exaggerated... She gave orders, some time ago, that no further copies should be issued. The greater part of the pamphlet is a mere statement of facts concerning the Act of 1944. In this case, repudiation would be meaningless." A new pamphlet would be issued.[14]

Later in July 1946 Ellen Wilkinson seemed to dig her heels in even further when addressing a public meeting in Sheffield. "She had no intention of imposing a single pattern of education upon secondary schools," she was reported as saying. "There was room in them for as much variety as there was among the children attending them. The grammar schools were rightly jealous of their own achievements and had a vital part to play in national life. It was to them in particular that they looked for high standards of disciplined study, and they would be the main, though not the only, channel for entry into the academic courses of the universities."[15]

It was only a few days after this that Ellen Wilkinson succumbed to asthma and began to cancel engagements. Although she was to have

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14 H.C.Debates,vol.424,cols.1804-1812,1830-1834,1853-1854,1.7.46
15 Times,17.7.46,p.2

periods of good health which even allowed her to travel abroad, she was intermittently ill until 4 February 1947, when she was reported to have bronchitis. Two days later she died. Leah Manning much later described the death of her friend and former colleague as having occurred when she was "alone in her flat, with no one to help her in those last desperate hours when, fighting against an attack, she took too many of the pills which alone could give her some relief."[16] The event was reported differently at the time. On 6 February the Times reported that she had been admitted to St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and the following day that she had died of a heart attack. The burial took place at Penn Street, Buckinghamshire and was followed by a memorial service at St. Margaret's, Westminster, which was attended by Attlee, his cabinet, Churchill and the Archbishop of Canterbury who gave an address. Ten days later the Westminster coroner issued a press statement that an inquest would be held. This was quite normal after a burial, he explained, and there was no question of an exhumation. "The whole matter will be completed...without sensation." The verdict was one of accidental death, the cause being heart failure following bronchitis and pneumonia accelerated by barbiturate poisoning. The pathologist found evidence of a "gross overdose", and commented that insomniacs such as Ellen Wilkinson could take some pills, become stuporous and then unwittingly take more.[17] It was the tragic end to an acrimonious controversy conducted in personal terms between two members of the same party. The point at issue between them was the most important to be decided in the field of secondary education.

George Tomlinson was Ellen Wilkinson's successor, the third Minister since Butler vacated his chair in May 1945, less than two years earlier. He was more experienced in the sphere of education,

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16 L.Manning, op.cit. p.204
17 Times, 4.2.47, p.2; 6.2.47, p.4; 7.2.47, p.7; 24,2.47, p.2; 1.3.47, p.2

having been a member of the party's advisory committee and Bevin's collaborator at the Ministry of Labour in his attempts to bring about a leaving age of 16. But by the time he took office, local authorities were already working on development plans in accordance with the principles of The Nation's Schools. A few rebelled. The West Riding development plan of 1948 stated, for example, that, "They cannot...agree that at the age of 11 children can be classified into three recognised mental types."[18] Anglesey, a Conservative local authority, considered that multilateral schools were the only sensible form of secondary education in its island setting. Several Labour local authorities began to establish multilateral schools, in some cases, such as Middlesex, only to have the policy reversed when power was lost to the Conservatives at the next county council elections. London had decided, even before the Bill had completed its passage through Parliament, that it would aim to provide "a unified system of secondary education in place of the existing system of education given in London in separate types of school."[19] But in the absence of a national directive, indeed in the face of a national directive, only slight progress was made towards the achievement of Labour's objective.

The 1944 Education Act was intended to strengthen and make more rigid the divisions between the three types of secondary school, and that it did. In many areas the technical element never existed on the scale intended in 1944, and in most areas it did not survive much beyond the 1950s. Thus secondary education for most children continued to take place either in a grammar school or a modern school. Those fortunate enough to gain a place in the former had better-qualified and better-paid teachers, a longer school life, the satisfaction of knowing that they were amongst the chosen few, often better if more ancient buildings,[20] the validation of their success by public

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18 Quoted in R.Pedley,The Comprehensive School,Harmondsworth 1963, p.40

19 G.L.C.,London County Council,Education Committee Minutes, General Sub-Committee,11.7.44

20 H.O.R.S.A.huts, standing for "huts on raising the school age", were the educational equivalent of "prefabs,"in domestic housing, and were mostly on primary and secondary modern school sites

examinations and incomparably better career prospects. The decision at the age of 11 was based almost entirely on the results of examinations which were open to the same objections as the widely-condemned pre-war "special place" examination. Parental influence in the allocation of a child to a school was negligible. By the 1950s there was mounting condemnation of the system. In 1964 a Labour government which was pledged to turn the system upside down was elected. Its aim was the eradication of selection in secondary education. But by that time the task was much more difficult, for it involved changing all that had been developed in the previous twenty years. Buildings, the training of teachers, curricula and examinations had all been developed to serve one system. Now the system was to be changed. H.C.Dent has commented, "If ever England had a chance to start afresh it was in 1945."[21] In the organisation of secondary education that chance was not taken. Having already largely lost the fight for the incorporation of its ideals in the 1944 Act, the Labour Party suffered a defeat after 1945 which was the more tragic for being partially self-inflicted.

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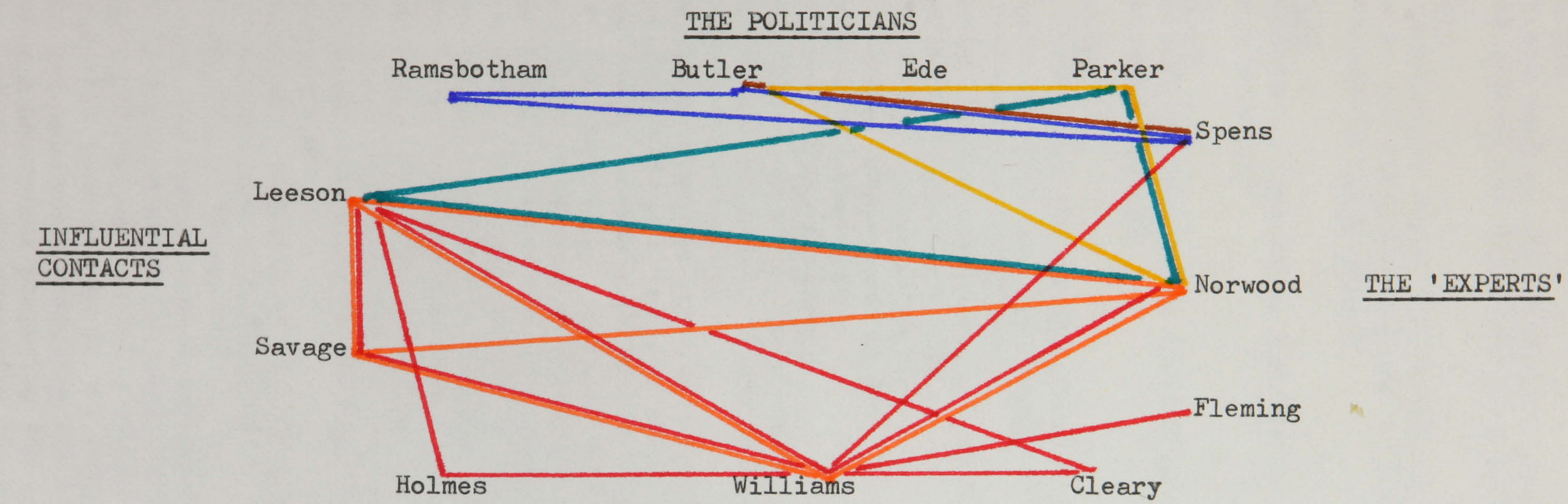
21 H.C.Dent, 1870-1970, Century of Growth in English Education, London 1970, p.123

MAKERS OF THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT

The makers of the 1944 Education Act had had much professional, educational and social contact with each other before they came together in the 1940s. This was less true of the politicians than of the other groups. Ede was the outsider.



Membership of Carlton Club
Membership of Athenaeum Club
Marlborough College (Butler and Parker were Norwood's pupils)
Corpus Christi, Cambridge (Butler was a fellow when Spens was a tutor and was elected as Master)
St. John's Oxford (Leeson and Parker were there, but before Norwood became President)
Board of Education (Holmes, Cleary and Williams had been at the Board from 1909, 1910 and 1919 respectively. Leeson was at the Board 1919 - 1924. Savage was there from 1919 to 1940 as a member of the Inspectorate, finishing as Senior Chief Inspector. Williams was assistant secretary to the Spens committee and an assessor to the Norwood and Fleming committees).

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Ed12 Series

478 Correspondence about the Norwood Committee
479 Minutes and committee papers of Norwood Committee; submissions to it
530 Reactions to Spens Report

Ed22 Series

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Ed135 Series

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215 Green Book; correspondence
216 Green Book; correspondence mostly on its confidentiality
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